

# First United Methodist Church

## Fruitful Congregation Journey



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**Prayer Service**

**May 3, 2015**

**Prayer Companion Booklet**

# Description of the FCJ process

The **Fruitful Congregation Journey (FCJ)** is a discovery process offered by the Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church to help churches more effectively fulfill the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. First United Methodist Church was invited to participate because it was recognized by Indiana Conference leadership as a key church in the Northwest District.

In the fall of 2013 FUMC entered **Step 1** of the process in which approximately 10 church leaders and our lead pastor, Rev. Craig LaSuer, participated. Over six months they read books and met once a month with other churches to discuss observations and share learnings.

Next, the church council voted to enter **Step 2** which involved a several-month-long assessment of our strengths and weaknesses by Indiana Conference leaders culminating in an on-site consultation held **October 17-19, 2014**. This assessment included a congregation-wide survey, feedback from “mystery” worshipers, extensive interviews with pastors, staff, and key church leaders, a church leadership workshop, and a demographics study of the area’s population.

The consultation team identified five strengths and five concerns. The strengths were church location and facility, the people, music, generosity, and heart for missions. The concerns were lack of a clear, shared vision, lack of a leadership development system, ineffective communication,

no intentional system for connection and spiritual growth, and untapped outreach potential. A **Ministry Action Plan** was developed, recommending the creation of eleven specific teams, to address the areas of concern. On **December 7, 2014** a congregational vote at a church conference accepted the Ministry Action Plan’s recommendations and we entered **Step 3** which involves implementation of the plan. Step 3 will last approximately 18-24 months and will guide our church’s direction for years to come.

## **Praying for the FCJ process**

Step 3 of the Fruitful Congregation Journey is about the entire congregation coming together to pray, dream, and listen in order to discern God’s will for this church in the next several years. Each of the teams is asked to make prayer a central part of their team’s process. As a congregation, we are also asked to lift up our church and this FCJ process to the Lord in prayer. **Our prayers are essential to this process.**

During our May 3<sup>rd</sup> prayer service we are joining as a congregation to pray for our church, the FCJ teams, and most importantly for the Lord’s help and guidance as we seek ways to more effectively fulfill the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. In the weeks and months that follow, please continue to lift up our church, the FCJ teams, and this process in your prayers.

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

## **CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER FOR FCJ TEAMS**

At this point, we have launched several teams to help our church be more faithful in fulfilling our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. As a church, let us pray together this week for these teams and for the whole congregation that we faithfully fulfill that mission.

The teams we have launched are:

The **Values and Vision** team is tasked with defining the core values and discerning the vision of our church. It is led by Bill Fornes and includes team members Dan Carpenter, Jonathon Day, Sally Gustafson, and Emalee Havel. They are planning to present our church's core values at the May church council meeting.

The **Guest Integration** team is tasked with developing a plan to track and welcome guests so they can be integrated into the life of the congregation. It is led by Doug Morehouse and includes team members Janet Ainsworth, Shari Bittles, Heidi Fornes, Rich Frank, Khala Hochstedler, and John Norberg. They are preparing to share their proposal at the May council meeting.

The **WIRED Capacity** team is tasked with developing a plan to expand the capacity of the WIRED service. It is led by Eric Barker and includes team members Paige Clinkenbeard, Tim Delworth, Katie Givan, Suzie Kline, Steve Murray, and Taylor Owings. They are pondering a variety of options for expanding the capacity of the existing WIRED service.

The **Streamlined Administrative Model** team is tasked with exploring streamlined models of church governance in order to allow members to do more ministering. It is led by Don Caddy and includes team members Jim Beaty, Nola Gentry, Jim Paine, Chip Rutledge, and Matthew Swabey. They are reading the book Winning on Purpose and are gathering information from churches that have adopted streamlined administrative models.

The **Communications** team is tasked with reviewing and assessing our internal and external communication processes and making recommendations for improvements. It is led by Jeanne Norberg and includes team members Jane Frankenberger, Charlotte Freeman, Dan Howell, Oesten Nelson, Andrew Ritchey, John Staver, and Diane Stott. They have done extensive work to identify all the ways we communicate, internally and externally. They have researched communication practices of other churches and they are preparing to bring preliminary recommendations to an upcoming council meeting.

The **New Leaders and Servants** team is tasked with creating a plan to develop new leaders and servants across the spectrum of the congregation. It is led by Megan Sapp-Nelson and includes team members Brian Martin, Neil McTavish, David Radcliffe, Kathy Vill, and Bill Walker. They are beginning with a book study as they seek ways to help the congregation identify their strengths for leadership and service.

The **Local Demographics** team is tasked with studying available demographic reports to assess the needs of people in the community to which the church could respond. It is led by Rev. Paul Newman-Jacobs, and includes team members Rev. Denny Frank, Sarah Kelly, Lisa Murray, and Tim Scott. This team is newly launched and recently had their first meeting to get acquainted and begin planning.

The **M.A.P. (Ministry Action Plan) Planning** team is led by Rev. Craig LaSuer and includes our FCJ coaches Rev. Jack Hartman, and Jane Creswell, and team members Don Caddy, Bill Fornes, Karen Hull, and Chip Rutledge. They meet regularly to assist Rev. LaSuer with forming teams to implement the Ministry Action Plan and to provide support and encouragement to the team leaders.

The **FUMC Team (the Whole Congregation)** is tasked with regularly lifting up this church and process in prayer, supporting and encouraging the team members, and preparing to use their gifts and graces to assist in implementing the plans that are created as a result of the work of all the FCJ teams. The leader is the Spirit of The Lord and everyone in the congregation is a member of this team.

Four remaining teams will be launched in the coming months. They are:

The **Staff Mission and Vision** team which is tasked with assessing key ministries and roles of staff in connection with the mission and vision.

The **Spiritual Development** team which is tasked with creating a plan of spiritual development for those within the congregation as well as those served by the congregation.

The **International Community** team which is tasked with exploring and developing an intentional plan to reach out to the international community.

The **Celebrate Global Involvement** team which is tasked with developing a plan to identify and celebrate the global involvement of the people of this church.

## Several Starting Points for Our Prayers

### **Prayers for Clarity and Doing God's Will**

“Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. <sup>7</sup> When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. <sup>8</sup> So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. <sup>9</sup> During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” <sup>10</sup> After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.” (Acts 16:6-10)

Let us pray...

that the Spirit of Christ make it clear to our church which paths we should and shouldn't take.

that our core values and vision will truly reflect God's will for our church.

that we might have a clear idea of who the people are that need our ministry.

for enlightenment, discernment, wisdom, and understanding, for our FCJ teams, and all members of the congregation so that we may carry out God's calling for this church.

### **Prayers for Humility and Forgiveness**

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?

<sup>15</sup> Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. <sup>16</sup> If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? <sup>17</sup> In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” (James 2:14-17)

Certainly there have been times as a church when we have missed opportunities to feed the hungry, welcome the stranger and help someone on the journey of following Christ.

Let us ask God for eyes to see those people and opportunities and ask for God's gracious forgiveness for when we have missed the mark.

## **Prayers of Celebration**

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.” (Philippians 4:8)

When you read this verse, what ministries and people come to your mind in our church?

Let us pray and praise the Lord for all the ways the Spirit is moving among us to be the people of God.

## **Prayers for Experiencing Change**

“Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7)

How do you feel about change? Is it something you welcome, or something you need time to become comfortable with?

Let us pray for openness to changes that come from this FCJ process. When change causes us to worry, let us take those worries to The Lord in prayer. Let us praise the Lord for the good things that can come from change.

## **Prayers for Encouragement**

“So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what cannot be seen is eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

Let us pray for the team leaders and team members. May they take time to rest and refresh when they are feeling tired. May we as a congregation find ways to support and encourage them in their work.

## **Prayers for Outreach in the Community**

“Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices.” (Luke 15:4-5)

Let us take time to ponder the needs of the people in this community and pray that we find ways both to serve them as disciples and to bring them into a relationship with Christ and the church.

### **Prayers for Understanding Ourselves as Disciples**

“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”  
(Matthew 28:18-20)

When you think about being a disciple of Christ what does that mean to you?

How can making disciples transform the world in positive ways?

Let us praise God and ask for help in seeing ourselves as disciples of Christ in all aspects of our lives.

### **Prayers for Growing as a Disciple**

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.”  
(Hebrews 12:1-2)

Reflect back on the key events in your own spiritual journey. What do you see as the ways you could continue to grow as a disciple?

Let us pray and praise God for his Son, Jesus, whom we can grow ever more deeply connect to.

Let us ask for guidance on our journey as disciples.

May we be a part of encouraging others in their spiritual journeys.



### **Prayers for Finding My Role in the FCJ Process**

“For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.” (Romans 12:4-8)

There is a role for everyone in the Fruitful Congregation Journey. We can all pray for the process and follow and support the teams in their progress. The proposals that the teams bring to church council will yield new ideas and the creation of new teams encompassing a large percentage of the congregation as we work to implement our decisions.

Let us pray for this process and for the teams that are underway.

Let us ask God to show us where our gifts and graces can be a blessing to this journey.

Let us pray for the teams as they interact with the congregation so that this is an inclusive ministry process of discerning God’s will.

### **My Personal Prayers for My Life, Our Church, and the FCJ Process**

Use this space to keep your own personal prayer list for yourself, our church, and this process.