

The Growing Tree

A Five-Year Plan

St. Luke's United Methodist Church, Houston

June 25, 2017

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Introduction

Background

What is God's preferred future for St. Luke's United Methodist Church over the next five years?

St. Luke's United Methodist Church's mission statement, **"One family in Jesus, putting faith to work in love,"** challenges us to "do stuff" to make an impact on the world around us. The Scripture verse from which the mission statement is derived, "the only thing that counts is faith working through love," (Galatians 5:6b) reminds us that religion itself is not valuable in God's eyes—only authentic faith put into action. The five-year planning process at St. Luke's has been one way we have sought to consider what actions our faith prompts us to take. Technically, it is not a plan, but rather a vision or target. It also does not outline all the specific steps necessary to achieve the goals included, and it is not in any way intended to be comprehensive. There are several important ministries that are not specifically mentioned as part of the plan. However, many of the initiatives are church wide and intended to undergird, enhance and strengthen. Further, each of our ministries make plans for each year, and many aim multiple years in advance. *The initiatives listed in this plan are intended to identify areas in which St. Luke's leadership intends to take significant steps forward or begin major new ministries.*

Ten years ago, St. Luke's Long Range Plan envisioned an outreach campus to be used as a platform to make a greater impact in a particular neighborhood, as well as a counseling center to address the needs of families and individuals struggling with relationships or mental health issues. That plan led to our Gethsemane Campus and the Nick Finnegan Counseling Center. In 2012, five years ago, our plan set eight initiatives:

1. Enhance Traditional Worship
2. Attract New Christians – New Worship and Discipleship Community
3. Make Room for Children
4. Highlight Student Ministry
5. Get Smaller to Grow – Small Groups
6. Transform a Neighborhood - Gethsemane
7. Tell our Story – External Communications
8. Build Awesome Spaces

This plan led to the birth of The Story Houston as part of St. Luke's and a major building program on all our campuses, including a new parking structure with St. John's School. It led also to the *Unbinding your Heart* program and the Inside-Out Habits that guide us, as well as an increased online presence to further the goal of reaching people where they are. Now, in 2017, it is time for a new plan, addressing the issues that we face as a church and looking for how we can get on board with what God is already doing in our midst.

Committee Membership

The Committee included the following lay members of St. Luke's:

Kristin Tillman (co-chair)
 Nick Erwin (co-chair)
 Rod Canion
 Corky Fowler
 Robert Frazier
 Rachael Goydan
 Joel Mohrman
 Kristin Reynolds
 Mike Stroman
 Matt Titus

Structure Sub-Committee

Vicki Keiser (chair)
 Doug Christians
 John Duffie
 Steve Gartrell
 Peggy Roe

Staff

Linda Christians
 Eric Huffman
 Larry Moore
 Tom Pace
 Teresa Robertson

Process

After initial organizational meetings, the committee sought to gather as much input as possible about hopes and issues facing various constituencies and ministries, as well as solicit ideas from the church body as a whole. This process included the following steps:

- 1) Staff Leadership Retreat (Previously held on February 2, 2017)
- 2) St. Luke's Board of Stewards meeting (March 22, 2017: open to whole congregation)
- 3) Sixteen meetings with representatives of the committee and every individual ministry group in the church
- 4) Separate idea sessions with The Story Houston and the Gethsemane campus
- 5) Conversations with individuals in the church

Additionally, the structure subcommittee connected with representatives of many large churches, both United Methodist and otherwise, in order to understand their system of governance and apply best practices at St. Luke's.

The data from all these sources was presented in an extended committee workshop on Saturday, April 8. Out of all the presentations, the group looked at how the ideas and challenges “clustered,” and eight areas of consideration emerged for further development. It is important to note that these were not placed in order of priority, but rather presented as eight individual but interlocking areas of work we hope to move forward as a congregation. These eight areas were assigned to teams, including staff and others outside of the committee, for further development. Some of these plans have greater levels of specificity than others with much work still to be done over the next five years on all of them.

Overall Goal: Increased Impact!

The tree that stands in front of St. Luke’s has long been an iconic image for our church family and is a part of our identity. It stands both broad and tall, with deep roots and strong branches. Like that tree, St. Luke’s Church is already broad and tall with a marvelous history and powerful ministries that change the lives of those in our church and across our city. But that beautiful tree must continue to grow. Over the next five years we hope to grow the St. Luke’s tree even more, increasing our impact in the Kingdom of God, with more lives changed in more significant ways for Jesus Christ. ***While past plans have called for the creation of significant new ministries, the plan for the next five years is about expanding and growing our existing ministries in three important ways:***

Spreading our Branches

We will continue to reach new people, making disciples of Jesus Christ as part of the body of Christ, the community of Christians. Our committee is recommending a goal of average weekly worship attendance of 3500 across all campuses and worship communities by the end of 2022, including The Story Houston attendance of 1500 in weekly worship. In 2016, St. Luke’s average worship attendance was 2128. Traditional Worship average attendance was 1409, Encounter was 152, Gethsemane was 168, and The Story Houston attendance was 403.

Increasing our Fruitfulness

In addition to reaching new people and improving our attendance in worship, we will increase the impact we make on those who are already a part of St. Luke’s, drawing them into ministries that facilitate their own spiritual growth. We will evaluate and prune ministries that are not effective in relation to the resources currently invested in them. We will also aim to increase the number of people we touch for Christ through our outreach ministry. We will identify metrics for participation in discipleship, generosity, and outreach and increase by 50% the number of people involved in all these ministries.

Deepening our Roots

If St. Luke’s tree is to continue to grow, it needs deeper roots. We will improve our infrastructure with a revised governance structure, increased financial reserves, retirement of our current debt and upgraded technology.

Eight Initiatives

In order to spread our branches, increase our fruitfulness, and deepen our roots, we will execute eight important initiatives. Two of these aim at ministries that impact the whole church – Engagement and Communications. Three of them focus on Individual Faith Communities in the St. Luke’s family – The Story Houston, Gethsemane, and Encounter. Three of them concentrate on Building Infrastructure to accomplish the other goals: Building our Financial Foundation, Upgrading Technology, and Revising our Governance Structure for less talking and more doing. Those eight initiatives are:

- **Overhaul Engagement Processes** for hospitality, belonging, servanthood and leadership development
- **Expand Strategic Communications** for traditional worship and all of St. Luke’s ministries
- **Enlarge Outreach** ministry, especially in the Gethsemane parish
- **Grow the Story Houston** as an integral part of St. Luke’s mission
- **Strengthen and Grow Encounter** worship community
- **Build a Strong Financial Foundation** for growing ministries
- **Improve Technology**, including a new church management system
- **Restructure Governance** for more doing and less reporting

Overhaul Engagement Processes for hospitality, belonging, servanthood and leadership development.

Goal

To develop intentional processes and culture for engaging people in movement along their spiritual pathway, including hospitality, belonging, servanthood and leadership development.

Current State

St. Luke's offers a large "pond" of many wonderful programs and ministry opportunities, but we do not have an effective and comprehensive process to engage each of our members in the mission of the church as a part of a ministry that best helps him or her move forward on his or her own spiritual pathway. Additionally, while we have many faithful lay leaders, we do not have a pipeline for identification of new leaders and engaging all leaders in ministry, particularly in the area of leading other people toward more significant spiritual growth. Research shows that churches whose attendance is greater than 2000 require more deliberate and streamlined engagement processes.

Strategies

By the end of 2022, St. Luke's will have moved from a "pond of ministries" to a "river of engagement," in which people are connected to a ministry that challenges them to take the next step on their spiritual journeys. This involves clarifying and addressing the following interlocking shepherding processes:

Hospitality: From guest or program participant (including ancillary programs and facility users) to member

Integration: From guest/member to integrated guest/member

Next Step: Ongoing re-evaluation of a place of involvement in the church to move forward on your pathway. This includes groups for belonging, discipleship and apostleship/service.

Prayer and Care: Providing care and prayer for every guest and member

Reengagement: Caring for and inviting reengagement of those who have no or very limited engagement at St. Luke's.

Leadership: Identifying and developing leaders who will help others move forward on the pathway.

Note: There are many other processes that, as St. Luke's continues to grow, need to become more intentional and clear as well. These include developing stewardship and generosity, identifying new ministries and sunseting others and many staff and operations internal processes. While these are important, they are not the focus of this particular objective.

Questions to be Addressed

- How will we measure progress/success?
- How will our people processes connect to technology?
- How will we communicate a new process internally and externally?
- How can we accomplish these goals with an intergenerational approach rather than silos?
- What kind of cultural and behavioral shifts will this require, and how can we lead that change?
- How will this initiative impact staffing?

Next Steps

- Appoint a Lay Ministry Committee to begin immediately, over the next five years, to address each of these key processes. This committee will become the standing Committee on Lay Ministry in the new St. Luke's structure.
- Identify and document current processes.
- Determine metrics for measurement, and establish a baseline for those metrics.
- Involve the staff and lay leadership in renovating these processes, and engage them in the cultural change from leading ministries to shepherding people.
- Work with the technology subcommittee to ensure a new database has required capabilities for new processes.

Expand Strategic Communications for traditional worship and all of St. Luke's ministry

Goal

To expand reach of external communication so that Houstonians will find and engage with SLUMC.

The Charge

Communications tells the story of God's redeeming work through St Luke's to ultimately move people to an introduction to, or deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. Working with all ministries, our communication staff will function as the in-house marketing agency, to build awareness, influence attitudes and change behaviors.

The Challenge

Almost monthly, vehicles and platforms for engagement change. There is much competition for people's time and attention. How then, do we invite and influence those who do not attend St. Luke's?

Current State

St. Luke's does an adequate job of **communicating with those inside the church** via

1. New website
2. Social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Vimeo
3. Revamped Spire Magazine
4. Ebulletin
5. On-site -Sunday bulletins, posters, hallway monitors

We need a strategy to focus **outside the church** membership, and to engage our members to be advocates for St. Luke's in their communications. The current tactics used:

1. PPC advertising Google Search (via a Google grant of \$120,000 per year)
2. Livestreamed Traditional worship services via our website and Facebook live, and capturing leads for welcome letter and invitation to engage
3. Instagram and Facebook activity (minimum of four posts per week)

(At this time, we are not investing in traditional newspaper ads, local magazines, print or electronic media.)

Questions to be Addressed

1. Do we increase production and expand the use of more creative video for web and social?
2. What are best practices for strategic paid advertising in the digital space?
3. How do we engage with such a large age span and four different worship communities? Voice?
4. How do we encourage our members and friends to be brand ambassadors in social media?
5. With what creative tools do we equip our members to "invite?"
6. How do we measure and further engage with our online community of LiveStream/Facebook Live viewers?

Next Steps

1. Assemble the new Communications Team.
2. Set up focus groups across demographics to determine how church news is consumed.
3. Engage a consultant to work with us.
4. Audit current social media and web.
5. Visit best practice communications groups in churches.

Enlarge Outreach especially in the Gethsemane parish.

Goal

To leverage the St. Luke's membership for greater impact in the Gethsemane community in southwest Houston.

Current State

Outreach Ministries

St. Luke's members are involved in impactful Outreach initiatives both locally and globally. All efforts have been strengthened by the inclusion of the 5 Habits. In Houston, current ministries continue to see improvement, and we have two new programs likely launching soon that have a high probability of success: Food Ministry and Home Helpers/Disaster Relief. In the Gethsemane neighborhood, huge strides have been made in the amount of impactful work being done, due largely to Gethsemane staff and St. Luke's work with CONNECT. To date, we have made only modest gains in attracting Westheimer campus members to Gethsemane for any purpose.

Outreach leadership continues to strengthen. A dedicated, capable lay chair is in place, and she, staff and outside resources are working together well to engage and educate the commission so that they are fully invested.

Our members are learning and adopting best practices of being involved only with initiatives that help and don't hurt. Concepts such as kinship, restorative justice, social justice and the need for proactive outreach efforts are resonating with members.

Increasing the number of volunteers in service and communicating effectively are our two biggest challenges.

Gethsemane campus

The Gethsemane Campus is a vibrant, multi-national community that worships at 9 and 11 a.m. on Sundays in traditional and contemporary styles. The community is composed of Anglo adults from the former Gethsemane congregation, first-generation African immigrants and refugees, Hispanic families and families of other nationalities. Gethsemane grows increasingly younger due to the influx of children and youth from African and Hispanic families, and The Belonging, our new service at 11 a.m. that attracts a younger population.

Gethsemane has worked hard in recent years to course-correct our focus and identity so that we are both a worship community that makes disciples of Jesus Christ and a community center that exists for the transformation of our neighborhood. Long-term partnerships with CONNECT, reVision, and the Christian Community Service Center will ensure that Gethsemane remains a hub of missional excellence and the epicenter of resurrection in Sharpstown and Gulfton for years to come. Yet over the next five years, discipleship ministries must reach a new level of effectiveness so that visitors and new members may experience lasting and meaningful church community outside of worship and become the next generation of the St. Luke's family in southwest Houston.

Strategies

- 1) Expand service **opportunities** in the Gethsemane neighborhood.
 - a) Increase number of high quality service opportunities, both large-scale events and ongoing programs.
 - b) Increase the depth and breadth of St. Luke's members in service.
 - c) Expand and strengthen Gethsemane community partnerships, primarily through CONNECT.
 - d) Utilize appropriate volunteer tracking system.
 - e) Communicate effectively internally and externally. This may require part-time staff.

- 2) Advance major Gethsemane neighborhood **initiatives**.
 - a) Build the CONNECT Community Center on St. Luke's Gethsemane property by 2022. The community center will house a Houston YMCA gym, Legacy Community Health clinic, and classrooms for church and community use. Fundraising will be accomplished through the CONNECT staff and Board of Directors, with a portion of the obligation falling to St. Luke's.
 - b) Launch an Early Childhood Learning Center (ECLC) on St. Luke's Gethsemane property by 2022. An initiative of St. Luke's and CONNECT, the ECLC would serve to break the cycle of poverty among families in the Gethsemane neighborhood, allowing parents to work and/or attend school while paying a reasonable fee for excellent childcare. The bulk of fundraising, for facility and program, would fall to St. Luke's.
 - c) Begin a jobs training program at St. Luke's Gethsemane by 2018. The program would be coordinated by Wesley Community Center and recruit adult students from the Gethsemane congregation and neighborhood. A goal of the program would be fast-tracking students into positions that pay a living wage.
 - d) Fundraise through annual stewardship campaign and the next capital campaign for specific partners and programs, including the Christian Community Services Center (CCSC) and CONNECT.

- 3) Grow **discipleship** communities at Gethsemane.
 - a) Invest in Fellowships: cultural affinity groups for African and Hispanic members that meet outside worship for prayer, study and fun in the native language of the group. Each fellowship will require part-time pastoral support.
 - b) Develop small groups: 10-15 people who meet regularly either at church or at home for prayer, study and fun. Collaboration with St. Luke's Adult Ministries will be crucial for raising leaders and launching new groups.

Measurement

Success of these strategies will be measured in relation to the following goals:

- 25% of St. Luke's active membership are engaged in service opportunities in the Gethsemane neighborhood.
- 90% of Sunday School classes and small groups partner with a community organization.
- Increased dollars for Outreach ministries are raised through the stewardship and capital campaigns.
- 100% increase in number of people served through Gethsemane neighborhood ministries.

Questions to be Addressed

- What is an effective communications strategy for Outreach ministries?
- How do we empower members to become self-starters regarding service?
- How may Outreach best support and partner with other ministries?
- What fundraising vehicles and strategy would best fit for our purpose?
- What will the format of Gethsemane small groups look like? Will they be a replica of Westheimer small groups or assume a unique identity?
- Who will we hire as Fellowship Leaders for the African and Hispanic Fellowships?
- How do we invite unchurched or de-churched neighbors into small groups, fellowships, and worship?
- How can we allocate more assets to external communications/advertising?
- How should Gethsemane and Outreach be jointly reorganized for maximum effectiveness?

Next Steps

- Get buy-in from Outreach Commission and Gethsemane Leadership Team.
- Address communication challenges.
- Research fundraising resources.
- Research volunteer tracking systems.
- Hire Fellowship Leaders to coordinate weekly Bible study meetings and monthly social gatherings.
- Launch small groups in Fall 2017.

Grow The Story Houston as an integral part of St. Luke's mission

Goal

To (a) continue to grow The Story's worship attendance, membership and involvement while (b) staying true to our stated mission to reach non-religious Houstonians and (c) integrating as fully and as smoothly as possible into the structure and systems of St. Luke's.

Current State

The Story has grown dramatically since launching in 2015. So far in 2017, an average of 625 people have worshiped at The Story's three services. Giving is also ahead of schedule; we expect to exceed \$700,000 in pledge receipts and plate offerings this year. Discipleship and membership processes are strong, and missions/sending ministries are developing quickly.

Strategies

By end of year 2022, we expect The Story to welcome 1,500 in worship per week on this campus, in addition to hundreds more in off-site worship gatherings held throughout the week. We anticipate these numbers will include 1,000 members who have joined. We expect to have baptized 1,000 people (total) by the end of 2022. We expect annual giving/revenues of over \$2,000,000 in 2022 and beyond. We envision Story members becoming more involved in leadership roles at SLUMC, bringing fresh energy and ideas for positive change and continued growth. We believe reaching these goals will involve:

- **Keeping Jesus at the center** by staying focused on our simple gospel message.
- **Investing in video ministry** (especially live streaming), enhancing communications and online presence.
- **Adding multiple worship services** (6-8/wk including our current three services) on this campus, including non-Sunday services.
- **Expanding worship space** to add some seating (increasing to 500 seat capacity) and adding a functional space for gathering/meeting/discipleship.
- **Increasing TSH presence** on SLUMC boards and committees.

Challenges

1. **Immediate Capital Investment**: To achieve our mission to its fullest potential, The Story needs a rather immediate financial boost to meet some capital needs related to video technology. When we entered the new building last year, there was no video equipment (cameras, lenses, hardware and software for video editing, etc.) and there was very basic stage lighting which is not ideal for live streaming or producing high-quality videos of our services. So far, we have raised around \$35,000 from within The Story community to address some of these capital needs, but another \$50,000 of items remain, including an additional video camera, some lighting upgrades, and hardware/software for production of the LiveStream. Addressing this need via the 5-year planning process would give The Story the boost it needs in the short term to have a greater impact in the long-term.

2. Integration: Aside from adding members from The Story onto existing SLUMC committees, we are not sure how best to continue to integrate the ministries. Furthermore, we are concerned that integration for integration's sake has the potential to hinder all SL ministries (including TSH) from reaching their greatest potential. There already is significant integration that is occurring naturally. Aside from membership and finances, which have always been fully integrated, The Story is also deeply connected to several other SLUMC ministry departments: Student Ministries, Communications, Staff Leadership Team, etc., and to a lesser degree Children's Ministries, Outreach and Gethsemane. We believe this integration will continue to grow deeper and wider without forcing the issue. Additionally, we have recommended that any structural integration of SLUMC and TSH continues to occur at the highest levels of leadership, specifically between the Senior Pastor of SL and Lead Pastor of TSH.

Upon considering these issues, Dr. Pace recommends a Personnel Committee Task Force to survey other churches who have multiple worshiping communities to see how these congregations are integrated, as well as engaging consultants to examine our staff processes and systems. However, any attempts at integration here should take into consideration the unique nature of our situation. Other large churches have multiple worship communities that are represented equally in decision-making processes, but if our growth projections hold true, TSH is positioned to play a more impactful role in SLUMC's future than a more typical faith community in a more typical UMC may be. We believe this reality should be reflected in SLUMC's systems and structure to promote unity and mission-driven ministry across our campuses.

Strengthen and Grow Encounter worship community

Goal

Through regular worship, learning, service, and social opportunities, members of the Encounter community will be involved in the life of the church (but not exclusively Encounter) and in a deep relationship with Christ. By 2022, Encounter will have an average of 225 (Fellowship Hall max capacity) per worship service each week.

Current State

Encounter is a valuable offering in the selection of worship services at St. Luke's. The unique worship format emphasizes communal prayer and has high quality contemporary music, and the atmosphere is relaxed and inviting for both churched and nominally churched people. The time of the service is appealing to families with young children, however it is a deterrent to those without children or those who have older children. Attendance has been stagnant over the past year.

Strategies

- *Consistent pastoral leadership*- Though Dr. Pace has been and will continue to be the primary preaching pastor, Encounter has regularly rotated associate pastors throughout its history. Going forward, consistent pastoral leadership will help anchor the service and provide stability.
- *Music*- Enhance the musical component of the service through an expanded repertoire and regular guest musicians. Additionally, showcase different styles (including acoustic, horns, gospel, strings, etc.) on Sunday mornings as well as through semi-annual musical events that can be used to introduce guests to Encounter.
- *Lay engagement*- Encounter's congregants are generally involved in the greater life of the church, but there is very limited lay involvement in the service. Lay teams should be formed and trained to support the worship service.

Questions to be Addressed

- Should there be a second Encounter service at 11 a.m.?
- How can we get more lay members involved in the worship service on Sunday mornings? What kind of worship teams do we need?
- What kind of social and outreach events should be implemented in order to reach inactive members and non-members that are not currently involved in Encounter?

Next Steps

- Begin livestreaming Encounter worship in Fall 2017.
- Increase social media / communication to market Encounter to inactive St. Luke's members and non-members.
- Hold a focus group of Encounter attendees that have begun attending in the past year.
- Target families with kids aging out of childcare nursery (incoming kindergarteners).
- Reformat the bulletin and utilize screens pre-service in order to convey information related to the Encounter service and community.
- Include accessible liturgy (creeds, calls to worship) on a more regular basis.

- In accordance with the new governance structure for the church, dissolve the standing Encounter Guiding Coalition and implement teams for ushers/greeters, communion, visitor engagement, social, and outreach. Hold twice-yearly training for lay members involved in worship teams.

Build a Strong Financial Foundation for growing ministries

Goal

Build a strong foundation for St. Luke's growth by retiring our debt, and by establishing and maintaining appropriate operating, maintenance, and capital reserves for church operations facility maintenance.

Current State

The current state of the church's outstanding debt is \$9.2 mm. There are additional pledge payments to be made over the next 3 years in the approximate amount of \$3.7 mm, as well as the sale of the parsonage, to be sold in mid-2018 for approximately \$1 mm. After the collection of these funds, the debt will have an outstanding balance of approximately \$5.0 mm at the end of the 2nd Q 2020. Additionally, proposed cost of renovation to the Fellowship Hall and the Encounter Worship Venue of \$1.8 mm will bring our debt, by the time the interest only period is concluded in 2020, to approximately \$7 mm.

We are currently making interest only payments on the line of credit. Principal and interest payments begin in the 3rd quarter of 2020. Additional pledge payments of \$100k per year will extend over the next three years (2020 through 2022) for a total of \$300k additional debt reduction.

The current state of reserve funds established for the church is a total cash reserve of \$2.1 mm. The reserve is broken down as follows: \$800k for a capital expenditure reserve, an operating reserve (aka "rainy day fund") of \$1.0 mm, a property maintenance fund of \$140 k and finally an additional reserve for specific items in the amount of \$150k.

Strategies

By the end of 2022, St. Luke's will have retired our current debt, and achieved targeted and fully committed reserves for operating, capital and maintenance, as well as a process for maintaining those reserves. In order to accomplish this, we will:

- Target a capital campaign in the Spring 2019 to strengthen our financial foundation for growth. The purpose of this campaign would be to expand the facility for the Story Houston, eliminate indebtedness, and grow reserves.
- Finalize strategies for building adequate reserves to achieve the goal established in the revised Reserve Policy. Establish an action plan to implement the policy and build the reserves in the annual budget as outlined in the reserve policy.

Contingency Plans

Should it not be advisable in 2019 to launch a capital campaign, a number of other alternative plans are feasible. For example, our indebtedness could be converted to long term debt and a smaller campaign could address the needs of The Story Houston. While St. Luke's has always resisted debt, a debt level of \$7M would lead to annual debt service of approximately \$600,000 annually. That would be about 6% of our annual budget, well within the healthy debt level of 10-15% for an established congregation. Similarly, a campaign could be postponed, as was done in 2008, and funds could be raised when the economy is stronger.

Next Steps

- Complete the proposed reserve policy and receive approval in Committee on Finance.
- Invite contributions to the Building Fund, as the Fellowship Hall renovation is launched.
- Include Building Fund for extra mile contributions in upcoming stewardship campaigns.
- Consult with Fundraising consultants regarding how to begin preparations for capital campaign in 2019.

Improve Technology including a new Church Management System

Goal

Improve the church's technology in a cost-effective manner to better connect with membership and enhance our operational capabilities to help grow the congregation over the next 5 years. This includes evaluation and conversion to a new Church Management System (ChMS)

Current State

Applications and Systems:

- The church's technological applications and management systems need updating. While we have made recent progress in a number of areas, including security and children's check-in kiosks, other applications are deficient.
- Arena, our current ChMS is very cumbersome to operate and has become functionally obsolete. It requires a custom programmer to modify its functionality, which adds considerable cost and delays productivity. Ministry Brands, the owner of Arena, has virtually halted development of the product, which has diminished its effectiveness as a church management system platform.
- The accounting software (Shelby V5) is also outdated and needs updating to keep up with current needs of the church.
- Communication and media need technological advancements. Current systems are outdated and require manually intensive processes and on-going maintenance or replacement.

I.T. Infrastructure:

- The capacity of the current IT hardware and network infrastructure is very adequate for the demands of the current systems and applications. However, the ongoing maintenance and potential capital replacement expense associated with the infrastructure could become cost prohibitive and will eventually become functionally obsolete.

Strategies and Time Line

- The technology committee is currently searching for a new church management system to enhance productivity and reduce costs. We continue to interview other churches and ministries to find a ChMS to meet the needs of St. Luke's United Methodist Church.
- We intend to replace Arena with a better church management software within the next year. The system currently needs updating to work in concert with other software the ministries currently utilize. There is an immediate need for a ChMS which will utilize current technology for member (and guest) management, text capable work flow and giving, and a church application integration to meet the demands of a growing, mobile congregation.
- Assess current communication and media utilization and future needs of the church; specifically evaluate live streaming of worship services, closed circuit TV in classrooms, touch-screen communications and other technological advances in this ministry.

- Assess and identify current fine arts and music technological needs, including recording technology, audio engineering, music composition and music and fine arts performance technological capabilities.
- As the on-premise hardware components and systems begin to require upgrades and replacements, it will be necessary to evaluate other technologies including hosted and cloud service strategies. Ultimately, the ongoing objective of our technology approach is to enhance productivity and reduce the total cost of ownership.
- Perform an overall assessment of St. Luke's technology, including Information Technology, Communications, Security and current staff capabilities.
- Prioritize areas to move forward over the next five years.

Questions to be Addressed

- Will the new ChMS need an additional staff as a Database Administrator?
- Will the new software meet the needs of the church for more than 5 years?
- Is the software capable of running on our current IT network and/or systems?
- When will the network infrastructure need an update?
- Will the software have the ability to integrate with other software (Accounting Software, Payment Provider, etc.)?
- Will the ChMS have the capability for multiple locations and fully customizable design scheme for specific locations?

Initial ChMS requirements and/or wish list:

- Attendance Tracking
- Benevolence Management
- Calendar Management
- Child Check-In
- Content Management (CMS)
- Contributions – including donating online, scanning checks
- Event Management
- Extended Attributes to assist in managing people with various needs
- Group Management
- Member Directory
- Member Profiles
- Membership Management
- Metrics
- Mobile Application Capabilities
- Multi-Site Management
- Online Giving/Payments
- Pledge Management
- Easily Generated Report Structure
- Text Giving
- Volunteer Management
- Website Management

- Workflow Management (approval process, communications, and task management)

A Description of Success

Fully integrated software in place and trained staff is the key to success. Improved management of the church's database with online capabilities implemented for the congregation and staff. Communication, hospitality, and outreach is vastly improved at St. Luke's United Methodist Church for all ministries.

Next Steps

- The Technology Committee will be responsible for moving forward in the process of choosing the ChMS. A ministry needs discovery assessment is currently in process of development. We will finalize and send out to each of the ministries. We will then document the results from the discovery assessment and prioritize the needs of the entire church.
- Hire a database administrator.
- Further develop and execute the multi-phased implementation plan for the ChMS.
- Assess technology needs beyond ChMS across the campus.

Restructure Governance for more doing and less reporting

Goal

St. Luke's UMC will simplify and streamline its governance structure so that (a) volunteer governance and executive leaders will focus on planning, decision making, and producing effective policies, and (b) more member and staff effort will focus on church-wide ministries.

Current State

St. Luke's currently uses a rather large and multi-layer governance structure that involves many participants, both lay and staff. These participants are encouraged to stay abreast of church plans and activities, and to share information with others in the church. The aforementioned approach has often led to a well-informed, but slow acting and at times a "meeting heavy" organization.

Strategies

Implement a new governance structure for St. Luke's as follows.

1. See charts for proposed structure.
2. The proposed structure replaces the Board of Stewards with 2 All-Church Conferences per year to continue in-person communications about overall church activities.
3. The current Executive Committee would be replaced with a 17-member Church Council and include the following: Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer/Finance & Operations Committee Chair, Staff-Parish Relations Chair, Lay Leadership Committee Chair, Advancement Committee Chair, Chairman of the Board of Trustees and 9 at-large members. The Church Council will include representatives from each faith community—The Story Houston, Encounter, Gethsemane and Traditional. The Senior Pastor will designate staff as liaisons for each committee and the Church Council overall.
4. The Church Council would meet at least quarterly.
5. An Executive Committee of the Church Council will be comprised of 8 individuals as follows: all officers of the Church Council, standing Church Council Committee Chairs, Lay Leader, Chair-Elect and Chair of the Board of Trustees. The Executive Committee will meet at least 6 times per year and as requested by the Senior Pastor.
6. The prior Board of Stewards was comprised of approximately 250 persons meeting quarterly and former Executive Committee was comprised of approximately 20 members meeting about 6 times per year.
7. The proposed structure replaces the Worship, Discipleship and Outreach Commissions with Volunteer Ministry Teams for each of the major areas of Worship, Discipleship and Outreach. The focus of this proposed change is to engage members in "doing ministry" instead of attending meetings where much of the time is spent hearing reports. The Worship, Discipleship and Outreach Commissions have had from 10 to 20 members each and have generally met quarterly.
8. The Board of Trustees remains unchanged in the proposed structure with 9 members meeting 3 times per year.

9. The Lay Leadership Committee will continue to have 9 members; their duties will include nominations for the Church Council including members with terms expiring on the Lay Leadership Committee and the other 3 committees of the Board of Stewards—Staff-Parish Relations, Finance & Operations and Advancement. The Lay Leadership Committee will also be responsible for orientation annually of all committee and Church Council members, leadership training for volunteer leaders and helping to engage individuals for the volunteer teams focused on the many Worship, Outreach and Discipleship ministries. The members of this committee will include members of all SLUMC faith communities.
10. The Executive Nominating Committee would be merged into the Lay Leadership Committee.
11. The Staff-Parish Relations (formerly Personnel) Committee will continue with 9 members; the chair of this committee will continue to be the immediate Past Chair of the Executive Board. This committee will continue to focus on annual reviews as well as other Staff-Parish Relations activities. The members of this committee will include members of all SLUMC faith communities.
12. The Finance & Operations Committee (formerly the Finance & Administration Commission) will reduce the number of its members from approximately 20 to 9 members. The Chair of this committee will also serve as the Treasurer. The members of this committee will include members of all SLUMC faith communities. This committee will review the budget and propose its approval to the Church Council annually, monitor the actual to budget financial results throughout each year for all ministries including the Day School, After School and NFCC, review financial policies & procedures annually, meet with the outside auditors, and review information from and provide guidance to the Facilities and IT Teams.
13. The Audit Committee is merged into the Finance & Operations Committee.
14. The Advancement Committee is a new proposed committee of the Church Council. This committee will have 9 members. The members of this committee will include members of all SLUMC faith communities. This committee is focused on advancing the overall mission of SLUMC—“We are one family in Jesus, putting faith to work in love”—through coordination and sharing of best practices across the SLUMC community for communications and generosity. This would include communications to the SLUMC and broader community regarding church-wide ministries as well as generosity activities to enable church-wide ministries such as day school, afterschool, Gethsemane, music, etc.
15. Under this recommended structure an estimated decrease in individuals participating in meetings for commissions and committees is approximately 75; while the decrease from the Board of Stewards to a Church Council is approximately 230. The number of board committees is reduced from 8 to 4. This reduces the number of overall governance meetings significantly.
16. The Chairman of the Church Council is an ex-officio member of all Church Council’s Committees.
17. For each standing board committee, specific charters should be developed so there is no overlap between committees’ responsibilities.

Implementation and Timeline

- Utilize the May Board of Stewards meeting to communicate recommendations for the new governance structure and answer questions.
- Utilize various avenues of communication in May and June such as The Spire to communicate the recommendations to the broader church community.
- Receive final changes and approval by the Long Range Planning Committee at the June 11 meeting.
- Complete a new written formal Plan of Organization Document for final approval at Church Conference in November.
- A transition team is appointed by the Executive Committee to lead the implementation effort. This could include the present Structure Sub-Committee, Lay Leadership Committee, Executive Committee or some combination of the above.

Questions to be Addressed

What will the term length be for those serving on the Church Council and Committees?

A Description of Success

We will know that this initiative is successful when...

1. Streamlined volunteer governance bodies working with executive leaders lead to better idea generation, planning and decision-making.
2. Better communication of church plans and decisions lead to a better-informed church community.
3. More church members are involved in volunteering with ministries church wide after implementation of the new proposed governance structure in 2018.

Committee Membership

Note as above: The Lay Membership Committee will seek to include representation from all worship communities in all committees, as well as include youth and young adults in the slate of leadership.

Church Council- Volunteer Positions

1. Chair
2. Chair Elect
3. Lay Leader (Co-chair Lay Ministry)
4. Secretary
5. Treasurer/ Chair Finance
6. Past Chair Church Council (Staff-Parish Relations Chair)
7. Chair Advancement
8. Chair- Board of Trustees
9. At Large
10. At Large
11. At Large
12. At Large

13. At Large
14. At Large
15. At Large
16. At Large
17. At Large

Executive Committee- Volunteer Positions

1. Chair
2. Chair Elect
3. Lay Leader (Co-chair Lay Leadership)
4. Secretary
5. Treasurer/ Chair Finance
6. Past Chair (Staff-Parish Relations)
7. Chair Advancement
8. Chair- Board of Trustees

Finance & Operations Committee- Volunteer Positions

1. Chair and treasurer
2. Lay member of the annual conference/ Lay Leader
3. Chair or member of Staff-Parish Relations Committee
4. Chair or member of Board of Trustees
5. Chair or member of Advancement Committee
6. Information Technology Team Leader
7. Facilities Team Leader
8. At Large
9. At Large

Lay Ministry Committee- Volunteer Positions except for Chair

1. Chair- Senior Pastor
2. Co-chair, Lay Leader
3. At Large
4. At Large
5. At Large
6. At Large
7. At Large
8. At Large
9. At Large

Staff-Parish Relations Committee- Volunteer Positions

1. Chair (past Chair Church Council)
2. Lay Leader/member of Annual Conference
3. At Large
4. At Large

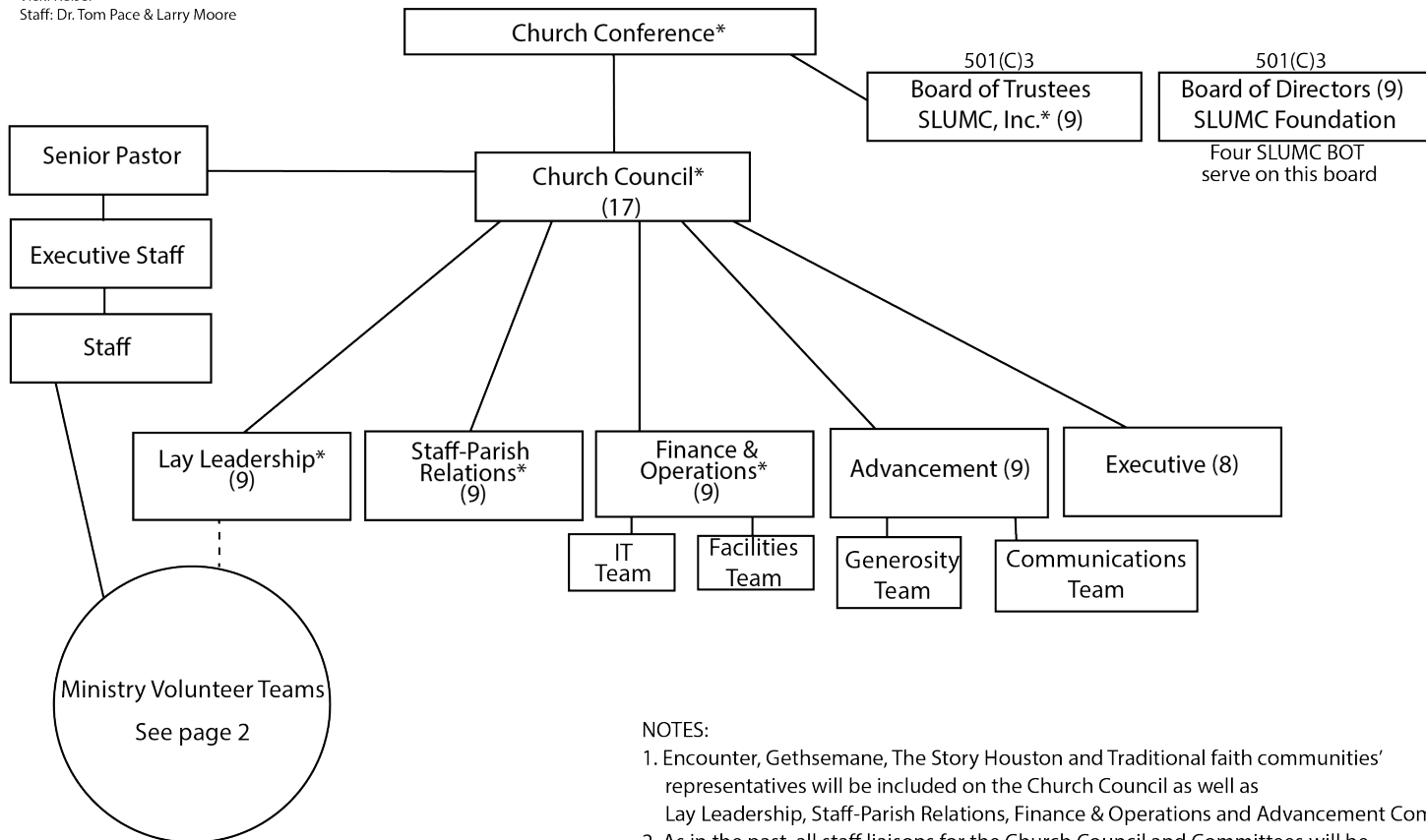
5. At Large
6. At Large
7. At Large
8. At Large
9. At Large

Advancement Committee- Volunteer Positions

1. Chair
2. Generosity Team Leader
3. Communication Team Leader
4. At Large
5. At Large
6. At Large
7. At Large
8. At Large
9. At Large

Proposed Governance Structure | May 24, 2017

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 John Duffie
 Steve Gartrell
 Peggy Roe
 Vicki Keiser
 Staff: Dr. Tom Pace & Larry Moore

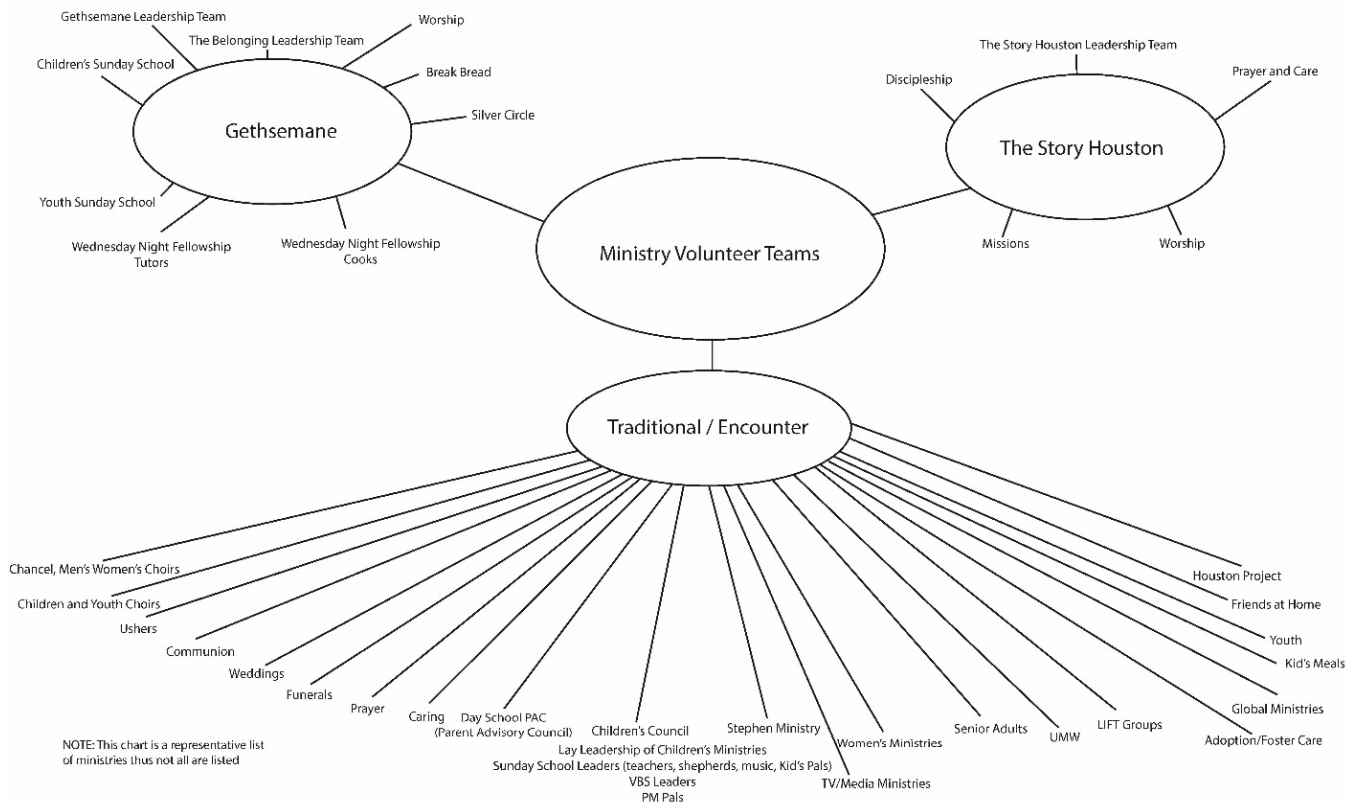


NOTES:

1. Encounter, Gethsemane, The Story Houston and Traditional faith communities' representatives will be included on the Church Council as well as Lay Leadership, Staff-Parish Relations, Finance & Operations and Advancement Committees.
2. As in the past, all staff liaisons for the Church Council and Committees will be determined by the Senior Pastor

* Required by UMC Book of Discipline in some manner or form

Ministry Teams: A Focus on Doing



Conclusion

Threats, Contingencies, and Opportunities

There is an old Yiddish proverb “man plans, God laughs.” The Epistle of James says, “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a town and spend a year there, doing business and making money.’ Yet you do not even know what tomorrow will bring...” – James 4:13-14a. Many things can and will happen which will necessitate a revision of this plan, and the Church Council will need to be nimble enough to respond to those changes. Some of those possible issues to be faced are below.

Conversations in the United Methodist Denomination

The Council of Bishops has appointed a special commission, authorized by the 2016 General Conference, to address issues around human sexuality. That commission, entitled “The Way Forward Commission,” will bring a report to a special called General Conference in 2019. While we do not know what proposals that commission will bring or whether they will be adopted, the discussion around these issues will create conversation in United Methodism and has the potential to distract us from our mission to offer people Christ and show them a God of love. While we will continue to keep our eye on our mission, the surrounding turbulence in the denomination may need to be addressed and lead to adjustments in timing or approach. The Church Council will continue to stay informed on the discussion and be ready to address issues as needed.

Significant Economic Headwinds

In 2007, St. Luke’s planned a capital campaign for the upcoming years. After the downturn of 2008, the church was nimble enough to shelve that plan, and wait for the appropriate time to move forward. It proved to be an effective strategy and led to a stronger campaign six years later. It is certainly possible that the economic climate would lead to a reevaluation of this current plan, and the Church Council should be ready to do so.

Change in Pastoral Leadership

A change in pastoral leadership can bring anxiety to any congregation. While our pastors have expressed their strong desire to serve St. Luke’s for the “long haul,” all are under the appointment of our Bishop and can be reappointed to a different mission field at any time. Thankfully, the United Methodist polity works to appoint pastors suited to that particular mission field and congregation. Whether a change is at the level of Senior Pastor, Lead Pastor for The Story Houston or Gethsemane, or any of our Associate Pastors, a pastoral leadership change may mean a reassessment of at least some part of the plan to ensure that the plan is aligned with a new pastor’s leadership approach and vision. St. Luke’s has strong lay leadership as well, who will provide the necessary continuity to keep the church moving forward toward the targets expressed in this plan.

Significant Changes in Growth Projections

The plan has identified a strong level of growth for our congregation, with much of that growth coming from The Story Houston. If the trajectory of growth changes significantly, either accelerating at a faster rate or reaching a plateau, then the Church Council would need to revise this plan in a significant way.

Ongoing Assessment

Each year, it is important that the Church Council monitor our progress against these targets and make decisions to revise or reaffirm our direction and strategy.

Next Steps

- 1) Each of the teams formed around the eight initiatives continues its work, including:
 - a. Expanding their team, if necessary. Some of the initiatives are handed off to standing committees or teams (e.g. the Committee on Finance or the Technology Team).
 - b. Developing specific tactics and a proposed timeline for execution of its plan.
 - c. Building proposed budgets for the first two years of timeline.
 - d. Establishing a date for the next report to the Church Council on progress.
- 2) The expanded engagement team meets with the current Committee on Lay Leadership to develop a process and slate of nominations for 2017 elected leaders in new governance structure. This engagement team will become the new Committee on Lay Ministry in 2018. This slate will be presented for election at the Church Conference in November.
- 3) Staff develops a further approach for communicating the five-year goals to the congregation.

Important Questions to be Addressed

This plan proposes some important goals for the next five years, as well as some strategies to achieve those goals. It also raises some important questions that will need to be answered. Many of those are already included in eight initiatives, but some merit highlighting here:

- 1) How can we integrate staff across all communities and campuses, particularly with significant growth of The Story Houston? What kind of staff structure will best facilitate that work?
- 2) How can we find the financial resources to fund our growing ministries, and most particularly, to increase our giving to outreach?
- 3) How do we evaluate the effectiveness of ministries and determine their level of impact?

Summary: A Snapshot of the Future

Imagine our old tree with strong branches stretching out across the lawn, roots deep, and new buds bursting forth. Imagine St. Luke's with a culture that expects involvement, in which each and every member is personally invited to grow as part of a ministry team or group. Imagine new people flowing into the doors of the church, drawn to be a part of diverse, life-changing worship communities and ministries by witnesses across a myriad of channels. Imagine The Story Houston crammed full of brand new Christians being formed in Christ, both in an expanded facility and in smaller venues across the city, as a magnet for those seeking answers and authentic community. Imagine Gethsemane with thriving fellowships of various affinity groups, all worshipping together, and positioned to meet the social, physical, and spiritual needs of the surrounding community. Together, we will reach for that target, as one family in Jesus, putting our faith to work in love.