

SUMMARY AND
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
STRATEGIC PLANNING
STEERING COMMITTEE

PRESENTED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING
OF
THYATIRA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

JANUARY 27, 2019

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PLEASE READ THIS FIRST!

How to use this booklet:

1. Grab a pencil, pen, or marker.
2. Before you dig into the details, please begin with a prayer seeking God's guidance as you read and reflect.
3. As you read, our suggestion is that you make the following notations:
 - a. Underline the ideas or parts that excite you
 - b. Circle the ideas or parts that concern you
 - c. Put a question mark in the margin next to those ideas or parts you have questions about
4. After you have carefully read everything, (and after the Q&A Session on February 10, if necessary), please use the form at the end of this booklet to share your feedback, or submit your response electronically.
5. Thank you very much in advance for sharing your thoughtful, constructive feedback that will help us be the Good News Capital of Western Rowan County!

INTRODUCTION

Thyatira has, so far, avoided the fate of many small churches in similar circumstances. Small, rural churches in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are closing or downsizing with alarming regularity. Fewer and fewer are able to offer a full time call to their pastor and are relying on supply preachers.

Thyatira is blessed to have a strong foundation of faith, hard-working and generous members, and a history of being willing to take risks to offer life-changing ministry.

Sustainability is hard enough to acquire even with these important assets. Strategic planning for ministry, and investment in a viable future, are essential if Thyatira is to remain strong and healthy.

HISTORY

In the last thirty years, Thyatira has done a number of great things, including the Mwandu project, the Tutoring program, the Preschool, and the Museum. We have maintained our buildings and grounds in excellent condition, provided our youth with a strong Christian foundation, and avoided significant conflict. These, and other accomplishments, demonstrate a track record in many of the areas that will be needed to accomplish the plans proposed in this document.

OPPORTUNITY AND TRANSITION

The Mill Bridge area has seen little change in the last several generations. However, our community is poised for transformation with the new housing development which is already being constructed near NC Highway 150 and G. Goodnight Road, as well as a widening of 150 which has been talked about for some time. At the present moment, the Rowan Salisbury School System has designated Mt. Ulla Elementary School as a Tier Three project with renovation or replacement school targeted

within an 11-20 year window. Property behind the church is also currently for sale and a change in use could impact the church's future.

The Steering Committee believes it is wise to try to be ahead of the curve on these issues and position ourselves to be proactive to them rather than reactive. We have the luxury of planning in the midst of order and plenty, rather than chaos and scarcity.

TRAJECTORY

Beginning in 2016, Thyatira has been on the journey of articulating its **Mission** (identity), discerning its **Vision** (what God is calling us to do and be), and developing a **Strategic Plan** to help us fulfill the Vision.

In the last three years, we have produced the following results:

- Mission: *"A Living Legacy of Love, Faith, Service, and Patient Endurance,"* based on the description of the first church at Thyatira in Revelation 2
- Vision: *"The Good News Capital of Western Rowan County,"* based on our congregational discernment, and the question, "Who Can't use More Good News?"
- Planning: Our Strategic Planning Steering Committee has outlined its recommendations in this document, focusing on developing our ONE MISSION OUTREACH and improving our STIRRING, HELPFUL WORSHIP

METHOD

As a resource, the Steering Committee used a well-known and successful planning method called The Twelve Keys to an Effective Church by Kennon Callahan. Callahan outlines 12 areas in the life of a church in which excellence is required to thrive. These areas are:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. One Mission Outreach | 7. One Major Program |
| 2. Shepherding Visitation | 8. Open Accessibility |
| 3. Stirring, Helpful Worship | 9. Land, Landscaping, and Parking |
| 4. Significant Relational Groupings | 10. High Visibility |
| 5. Strong Leadership Team | 11. Adequate Space and Facilities |
| 6. Solid Decision Making Process | 12. Generous Giving |

The Twelve Keys method emphasizes building on a congregation's strengths rather than trying to shore up its weaknesses, a kind of "rising tide lifts all boats" approach. For the purposes of intentional strategic planning, Callahan recommends building on one primary, identified area of strength, and improving one secondary strength.

Of the twelve areas above, Thyatira's four highest rated areas were Stirring, Helpful Worship, One Major Program, Open Accessibility, and Generous Giving. Of these, **Stirring Helpful Worship** was chosen as the Primary area of strength in which the Committee felt Thyatira could most easily improve and benefit.

From among the secondary strengths to improve upon, the Committee chose **One Mission Outreach** since Callahan identifies it as the most important area in which a church must do well, and because Thyatira already has a strong history in this area.

Prioritizing our Worship and Mission does not mean we will not take appropriate opportunities to improve in the other ten areas. However, it does mean that these two areas will be our main emphasis during the life of the plan.

ONE MISSION OUTREACH RECOMMENDATIONS

At the culmination of the Mission Decision Event in August, we tallied the results of your voting and found that the difference between the winner, *Nurturing Neighbors in Need*, and the second place finisher, *Supporting Students and Their Schools*, was a mere six votes out of 150 cast.

In light of the closeness of this result, the fact that local students (and their families) are, in fact, our neighbors in need, and the strategic nature of working in partnership with our local schools, the Steering Committee recommends that Thyatira pursue as its ONE MISSION OUTREACH efforts to support members of our extended community to succeed educationally. It is important to note that *the Committee is not recommending any reduction to any of Thyatira's current efforts to help people in our community.*

This strategic recommendation is made in light of the truism that as the community goes, so goes the church, and as the school system goes, so goes the community. The sustainability and vitality of almost any community (including its churches and other institutions) depend on the quality of the public school system. Good schools attract new residents who are potential new members of the church.

Beyond this possibility for evangelism, however, is the underlying truth that helping local students gives them better possibilities for the future and strengthens our community in many ways. Whether these students attend college, receive vocational training, or choose simply to work, a stronger school system and support network for education will make them all be better prepared for whatever path they choose.

Some specific elements of the Steering Committee's recommendations about our educationally-focused ONE MISSION OUTREACH are as follows:

(Short-term)

1. Establish Thyatira as a RSS Summer Feeding Program site
2. Establish an Educational Partnership Ministry Coordinating Team responsible for developing impactful ministry opportunities and for overseeing all aspects of Thyatira's relationships with local schools
3. Promote, and make Thyatira available, as a place where education-oriented programs can meet, e.g, the current Smart Start Rowan Kaleidoscope program
4. Use a small portion of Thyatira's abundant Scholarship endowment to offer an annual college scholarship in Thyatira's name to one or more non-member West High School students, through an organization such as Crosby Scholars
5. Hold an annual event featuring innovative educational partnerships
6. Repurpose the current Mission Resource Center to provide ministry space for such programming as:

- a. Tutoring/Afterschool/Mentoring/Wi-Fi Hotspot Programs
- b. Parenting Education
- c. School Supply Depot/Clothes Closet
- d. Scouting (all groups)
- e. Other programs or projects as developed by the Educational Partnership Ministry Coordinating Team

Note: A portion of the building would continue as storage and retain the existing loading dock and large door.

(Longer-term)

1. Relocate and update the Thyatira Preschool to current Fellowship Hall. This will:
 - a. Provide a more conducive learning environment for the Preschool with the possibility of hosting more students in a full day format.
 - b. Make available first floor classrooms for other church programming
2. Build a new Fellowship Hall and modernized meeting space

WORSHIP RECOMMENDATIONS

Data generated by the recent Thyatira Worship Survey confirmed what the Committee had largely determined: that Thyatirans are generally satisfied with our current worship.

The nearly unanimous belief that music is essential for our worship led the committee to consider options for improving it, as a way to improve our worship overall. At the same time the committee was analyzing the survey results, our long-time organist, Ron Mercer, announced his departure, citing principally the hazard posed by the narrow and possibly dangerous stairs leading to the balcony.

In light of the need to recruit a new organist, and that communication between worship leaders and the organist is very difficult given the organ console's place in the balcony, the committee believes moving the console downstairs offers us the best opportunity to find, retain, and utilize a new, high quality organist in the service of an improved music program. This will also open the far side of the balcony to worshipers, as it is currently very impractical for people to go past the organ.

In addition, the Committee believes that our worship can be improved in other ways, and therefore is making the following recommendations:

Specific Recommendations

1. Move organ console downstairs opposite current location of the piano
2. Move piano to opposite side (next to new organ console location)
3. Turn the first three pews on each side of the church 90 degrees to aid choir and provide better view of pulpit area
4. Revisit Lay Liturgists role and preparation
5. Improve greeting practices
6. Offer Livestreamed and/or YouTube recorded service
7. Host Music and/or Seminary Interns (as available)

IMPLEMENTATION

Each of these recommendations comes with direct and indirect costs, including implications for staff, physical plant, and volunteers. These recommendations, once approved in principle, will guide a more complete analysis for a budget and timeline for implementation.

Ultimately, as with all decisions in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Session is responsible for the stewardship of church.

RESOURCES

In the last two years, Thyatira has been blessed to receive two large, unrestricted gifts, the balance of which exceeds \$150,000. The Session has deferred until the conclusion of the Strategic Planning process its decision on how to appropriate these funds, providing flexibility for new initiatives such as those proposed in these recommendations. They are currently earning interest along with our other investment funds.

This initial pool of funds, as well as other sources of income over the duration of the plan, should be sufficient to undertake the short term initiatives (excluding the proposed new Preschool/Fellowship Hall project).

FEEDBACK AND PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Although the Steering Committee adequately reflects the diversity of the membership of Thyatira Presbyterian Church, it in no way can fully represent the entire membership. In order to make sure its recommendations are consistent with the church at-large, and to make sure no insurmountable obstacles have been overlooked, a thirty day comment period, ending on January 28, 2019 will allow members and friends of Thyatira to offer feedback on what is contained in this report.

It will be most helpful to the Steering Committee and the Session if comments are constructive in nature, rather than critical. The Committee recognizes it cannot please everyone, but has done its best to take into account all the input it has received during the course of its work, and will do so with the information received during the comment period.

In addition, the Steering Committee will hold a Q&A and Feedback Session following worship on February 10.

CONCLUSION

For more than 260 years, Thyatira has been a central feature of this corner of Rowan County. It has always adapted to the changes around it, and this plan provides a starting point for this generation to be the Good News Capital of Western Rowan County.

STRATEGIC PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS FEEDBACK FORM

We want everyone's helpful feedback!

You can submit this in writing by using this sheet, or electronically by following the link found at www.thyatirapresbyterian.org/strategic_plan

Please share with us your thoughtful and constructive feedback to the Recommendations using the following questions:

1. Of all the things you underlined, which two excite you the most, and why?

a.

b.

2. Of all the things you circled, which two do you have the most concern about and why?

a.

b.

3. Of all the question marks you placed, which two questions do you most want to have answered?

a.

b.

Thank you very much for sharing your thoughts!

Please submit this form by February 28, 2019 to:

Thyatira Presbyterian Church
220 White Road
Salisbury, NC 28147

or

office@thyatirapresbyterian.org