

On Monday, January 16, 2012, the Vital Church Initiative group met with the Administrative Council to provide background information on the initiative. Everyone agreed that it would be helpful to share the information with the congregation. Updates will be shared via future Hotlines, the church website and Facebook, at committee meetings, and during worship services.

### **WHAT IS THE VITAL CHURCH INITIATIVE?**

A pilot program initiated by the West Michigan Conference of the United Methodist Church. The Missouri Conference of UMC designed and implemented the initiative with quantifiable success. Pastor Glenn was called upon to initiate a pilot program in the Lansing District. Holt United Methodist Church (HUMC) is one of several area churches participating in the model for large churches.

A primary key to the success of any resultant initiatives at HUMC will be leaders - lay and pastoral. Currently a team of HUMC members are attending a multi-month Lay Leadership Development (LLD) series lead by Naomi Garcia, a skilled trainer and leader from the West Michigan Conference.

Ultimately, those attending the Lay Leadership Development (LLD) series are expected to be in a better position to identify, with Pastor Glenn and others, areas where HUMC can improve its outreach, promote discipleship, and focus on the mission(s) of HUMC.

### **WHY IS THIS NEEDED?**

For a number of very sound reasons.

1. We are currently experiencing enormous structural changes in our communities and populations. It's a revolution, a transformation, a sort of metamorphosis. It does not happen, but rather it is driven by agents of change. This change from one way of thinking to another is often referred to as a paradigm shift.
2. What we are seeing is that while the global church was busy adapting to a secular culture, the USA has become spiritually thirsty.
3. Many things have changed in our society. One of the most evident changes has to do with the way we want to learn. The way we learn has profoundly changed from lecture to entertainment.
4. Many people have changed the way they view the global church. We are losing the battle for the hearts and souls of the people because of this great divide. People today need a church that is relevant, but too often we are seen as irrelevant to what is going on in our world.
5. Pastor Rick Warren at Saddleback Church in California received a lot of criticism from all sides when he hosted a session in 2008 with Barack Obama and John McCain. Many people felt that it was not right for this forum to have taken place in a church. The backlash from the event is just one example of how we are moving from a nation of one God to a nation with many gods. Instead of "One Nation Under God" it is beginning to look like we are making a secular nation.
6. Over the course of many years, the global church became comfortable, too comfortable. As this happened the Gospel shifted from a church "on mission" to a church that "supports missions." That may seem like a minor change to some, but it changes a church from being active to being passive.
7. Churches have spent millions preparing pastors to deliver critical interpretations of the Bible, while the world wants to know how to apply Spiritual matter to their lives. People today are not as interested in a purely theological discussion as they are in the application of that information.
8. There was a time when people who thought of a pastor pictured a person standing in front of a small house next to their church tending to the flower garden in between visits from the ladies in the church bringing by some desserts. Too many pastors entered the ministry hoping this was a safe and loving place to have a career, while the world was demanding leadership willing to lead the church into dangerous places.

9. One major issue is that atrophy has set in throughout the church community. Some definitions of atrophy are:
  - a wasting away of the body or an organ;
  - degeneration or decline from disuse;
  - decrease in size, deterioration or withering away
10. All of the previous keys add up to a perfect storm that is hitting the church of today. "The church must raise her sails and move with the Spirit if we are not to be left behind. It is not enough to simply hang on; we must boldly move forward."

"You can change the name, but if you don't change the heart, the atrophy will kill you in the end."

--Erwin Raphael McManus from the book, An Unstoppable Force.

### **HOW MUCH CHANGE ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?**

It's too early to address what may happen at HUMC. Sometime in the next few months, HUMC will be visited by a "mystery" observer who will offer learned suggestions on what HUMC can do to meet the challenges we face.

### **WHEN WILL WE KNOW MORE?**

Beginning in February, there will be updates in The Hotline and on the HUMC website that will share what we're learning the Lay Leadership Development series, and how you can take an active role in the implementation of any needed changes at HUMC.

### **WHO FROM HOLT UMC IS TAKING THE LLD COURSE?**

MARY-JO DeLANY  
 E: maryjo.delany@gmail.com  
 P: 517.268.6699

BECKY HILBERT  
 E: hphilbert@hotmail  
 P: 517.676.9534

BARBARA FLORY  
 E: barbflory@gmail.com  
 P: 517.694.7114

KAREN SCHULZ  
 E: ktschulz@comcast.net  
 P: 517.272.0031

MAYNARD AND EILEEN HAMILTON  
 E: hamiltonef@hotmail.com  
 P: 517.243.0323

LOUANNE SERVICE  
 E: louservice@yahoo.com  
 P: 517.372.4538

RICHARD AND SHARON SMITH  
 E: drawplay@comcast.net  
 P: 517.694.1833 C: 517.648.1333

If you would like more information, please feel free to contact any of those folks.

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