

Building Master Plan Project

No one can say that 2007 has been a “business as usual” year for our congregation. Based on a budget crisis for the 2007 calendar year, the Administrative Board charged a sub-committee (renamed the “New Hope Task Force” (NHTF)) with the task of looking at how we were going to fund the work of ministry at First United Methodist Church of Royal Oak. For almost a year, what was viewed as a crisis moment last December has evolved into a process that has forced us into dreaming for our future and looking beyond the current needs of our congregation.

A little history first...

One of the early results of the meetings of the NHTF is our mission statement. On the heels of a proposed sanctuary renovation project, it was decided that that input from a broader range of the congregation was needed in order to ensure both committee and congregation were moving in the same direction. As part of the Sanctuary Renovation Committee’s proposal, it was felt that the committee needed to widen the scope of vision to take into account the needs of the entire building, not just the sanctuary.

After her presentation to the Sanctuary Renovation Committee, it was agreed by consensus that Ellen Schippert would be the ideal person to lead us in a Master Planning Process for our Building and in May of this year, the congregation, by vote at a special Church Conference, agreed to retain her services.

Where we’ve been...

In June, Ellen met with the Council on Ministries at a mini-retreat to begin hearing from us what works and doesn’t work for our congregation’s ministry. A 20 person Master Plan Study Committee was formed to work with Ellen.

The Committee began meeting monthly to begin the process of inviting at least 75 persons from the broadest range of the congregation as possible to form a group called “Advisors.” Since August, the Committee has been meeting to form the foundation of our larger meetings with the Advisors.

Members of the congregation have also been asked to complete a “Facilities Supporting Ministry” survey, asking what things work for each group in regards to the building.

What we’ve done...

In the past six months, nearly 70 dedicated members of the congregation have met for four hours on three Saturday mornings. In September we recalled our history and past ministry, our life today, and our hopes for the future. This conversation and reflection formed the foundation of “Guiding Concepts” - a one-page statement identifying what the congregation treasures from its past, values today, and hopes to pass on to future generations. We read the Guiding Concepts as a litany and Pastor Susan preached on

them in worship on November 11. The Guiding Concepts is printed separately in the newsletter. The Guiding Concepts are about more than the building. They reflect who we are as a community of faith in Royal Oak today. This statement is something we *must* refer to as we go about developing a master plan for our building as well as planning ministry programs for the future.

In October, we refined the Guiding Concepts and began building an “Architectural Program Statement” (APS), which is a statement defining what the congregation hopes the church facilities will include when the project is complete. In November we refined the APS and the committee is now working on finalizing it.

Where we’re going...

What happens next is probably the most crucial part of this process. Ellen will compile all the components she has gathered from our meetings and create the “Facilities Supporting Ministry Report”. When this is complete, we will have “a comprehensive report that includes background on the church building and congregation, survey of existing facilities (e.g. areas for worship, worship support, music, education, meeting, gathering, fellowship, and administration), and recommendations.” During the weekend of January 26 and 27, Ellen will be with us to share her findings with us and will present the report to the congregation.

The process of creating this document has taken dozens of hours by many people. However, after January, the real job begins. We begin the 2008 program year with a zero-based budget, meaning we have created a budget that supports what we intend to do next year rather than “doing what we’ve always done.” As we look toward the future, our work must be focused on how to create church-based and community-oriented programming that will encourage evangelism and will invite and welcome the community into our building for worship, fellowship, Christian education, and mission.

As Pastor Susan has said, “We are a congregation filled with people who are looking ahead to the future with a great sense of eager anticipation, with excitement and expectation, with hope and joy.” May God continue to shine forth in our congregation and help us blaze a new trail for generations to come.