

ESSENCE STATEMENT

Our Community of Faith exists as a gathering place for those who seek to follow Jesus on a dynamic journey of praise and service.

INTRODUCTION

This strategic plan is the result of almost three years' work by our Strategic Planning Committee. We have been observing, listening, studying, consulting and praying in order to articulate a new strategic plan for Mount Forest United Church. It provides the direction of our mission, ministries and priorities for the next five years and beyond.

Our world is changing. As the demographics of our church change, ministry and program needs and opportunities require a new lens to both retain and attract members.

Age of Participating Members	% of Participating Members
0 – 18	5.19
19-30	11.23
31-45	12.68
46 – 60	22.66
60+	48.24

The fear of change or reluctance to embrace it was identified on several occasions throughout this process. Adjusting to change is not easy, particularly given the fast pace in today's society, and if not addressed, will present further challenges for us.

This is an exciting time for us. The planning process has identified a time of promise and opportunities in the life of our congregation. Members have expressed a desire to be part of worship services, to continue our work in our community and in the work that God calls us to do.

Congregation growth, new community-based ministries and increased building utilization are inter-related. Through this process of strategic planning, we are invited to develop new "friends". We already have friends who help at church events, but who do not attend Sunday worship. The opportunity is here to make more friends, both individuals and organizations, who may want to rent our facilities, who may want to help us leverage our facilities for new ministries and those who will help with our mission, to volunteer and to give financially to specific missions. Some will join us on Sunday mornings, others will help us invent new forms of church meaningful to them. Our very successful Community Round Table opened up many ideas and new partnerships, and most of all – dialogue! Our mission is to continue that work and be more fruitful in our community and beyond.

We are communicating weekly through both radio and television. Our doors are open to many community groups, and we continue to support new programs such as the Raw Carrot, a social enterprise that has become a true blessing in our community. These are just a few examples of how Mount Forest United is lifting up our community and we continue to be a vibrant faith community into the future. We have learned that our facilities, our congregation and our staff provide many unparalleled opportunities for ministry. The purpose of the plan is to bring into focus the goals and strategies that will enable our members to enjoy a beautiful church building that celebrates our traditions and look to the future through new ideas. The plan will prepare our church for a level of service that will enable us to become a fruitful congregation.

Although our consultations and research have focused mainly on our community of faith, there are other issues that need to be figures into our planning. For example, as the effects of climate change become real, it appears that there will be mass migrations of people and other global effects in coming years. Poverty is a real issue in Mount Forest. Seeking right relationships with the first peoples of this area is also of vital importance. As well, technological developments in the past decades have resulted in astounding degrees of social isolation for many, particularly our seniors.

All indicators are pointing to the development of local community as a form of building resilience in the face of these issues and whatever else might come our way. Mount Forest United Church has an opportunity to be a centre of innovation in providing opportunities for spiritual growth and the development of community partnerships.

There is no doubt we have set ambitious goals for our Church family here at Mount Forest United. We can't solve all the problems in our community or in the world, but we can bring people together to see what we can do together. A renovated sanctuary that is welcoming, beautiful and accessible and which can be used for a variety of uses contributes to the manifestation of this vision.

The sacred needs to be kept at the forefront of this plan. Not in a missional sense of "converting" people to Christianity, but in acknowledging and feeding the need for spiritual sustenance and growth throughout life's journey.

The plan invites us to be a community of faith and to participate in the personal practices of discipleship. As we invite God into our lives and our hearts, we purposefully cooperate with the Holy Spirit in our spiritual growth, and we continue to serve and love others as we are guided by God in our giving to others. We invite each of you to become an active part of this exciting and transformational experience. Many blessings to all as we walk this journey of faith together.

PROCESS



The Strategic Planning Committee first began this process of exploration in the summer of 2016 with the approval of a grant from Hamilton Conference’s Ministry and Mission Fund.

An “Intake Assessment” was completed in October of that year with Edge consultant Bob Richards. The Intake Assessment included bringing together the Church’s history and background of the congregation. The Assessment can be found at Appendix “A”.

A fairly lengthy process of information gathering took place throughout 2017 as part of the Edge “Onboarding Assessment”. In addition to the collection of statistical information, information about current church programs and activities, a property assessment was also completed. The Onboarding Assessment is attached as Appendix “B”.

The first consultation event took place in December of 2016 in the form of a “Christmas Café” where we invited young adults of our church family to learn more about how we might engage them in the Strategic Planning Process (e.g. social media, web conferencing, etc.). We didn’t want to miss an opportunity to connect with them and tell them about the strategic planning project. We held this event over the Christmas holiday break. Some of the first fruits of this event included the creation of a Mount Forest United Church Young Adults Facebook page and the Skills Sharing Day.

A series of “Table Talks” were held through 2018 following Sunday worship services at fellowship time. This was an opportunity to hear from the congregation when we explored questions like “How would you describe the church to someone who has never been here before”, or “If you could change anything about the church or your role in it, what would it be and would it improve your involvement?” The answers were honest and heartfelt. The Table Talk notes are attached as Appendix “C”.



On June 19, 2018 the Strategic Planning Committee hosted a Community Round Table, with Jill Strapp, an Edge Renewal Advisor as our facilitator. We were very pleased that over 32 community organizations including service clubs, other area churches, Wellington North Mayor and Wellington County OPP (58 people) attending. A list of the attending organizations and the follow up report prepared by Jill Strapp is attached as Appendix “D”.

The committee thanks the United Church Women for providing a delicious supper to the attendees.

The final consultation in the planning process was a Congregational Vision Day held on January 19, 2019, once again facilitated by Edge facilitator Jill Strapp. Day care was provided to accommodate young families. Thirty-one members of the congregation attended, along with the Strategic Planning Committee who facilitated each of the group discussions. The main theme of the day was “Engaging in God’s Mission – What is Emerging for You as to God’s Call?” This fruitful discussion produced nine main initiatives that, together with the abundance of information and previous steps in the process have formed the basis of the four pillars outlined in the following pages. The Vision Day Report is attached as Appendix “E”.

We encourage you to take the time to read through all the material provided. We trust you will find it to be an accurate analysis of our church, but you will also be pleasantly surprised about how much we are already doing, and at the same time, recognize that much is yet to be done.

And finally, we thank each member of our congregation for your prayers, your candour of thought and your ongoing support of our church family at Mount Forest United.

Strategic Planning Team

Laurie Aitken

Karl Ellis

Rev. Sheryl Spencer

Patty Sinnamon (Chair)

Ron Harper

Michelle Matheson

Barb Schellenberger

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. GOVERNANCE

Foundational work is necessary to streamline the operations and leadership of the church. Present Council members are finding the current structure and processes to be ineffective and often frustrating. A reorganized structure will improve the decision-making processes for the church, freeing up time for members to become involved in other strategic initiatives.

Goal: **Improve the decision-making processes for the church.** This will free up time for members to become involved in other strategic initiatives and to allow new members to explore church leadership opportunities

Action: Continue the work started to address a streamlined structure and constitution. Create a working group if necessary, to explore other governance models.

Timeline: Presentation to Council in January, 2020 with follow-up presentation made at 2020 annual meeting.

2. SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT



Throughout our consultations, spiritual development proved to be one of the highest priorities. This was also confirmed by the degree of engagement with the Discipleship series held in the spring of 2019. Traditionally the church has been seen as religious but not spiritual. We are experiencing a cultural shift particularly

among young adults towards more of a spiritual focus. We have an opportunity to be involved in a shift that includes spirituality as a vital component of living faithfully.

This is an excellent opportunity for partnership creation and MFUC is already well placed as a hub within Western Ontario Waterways Region. This could take place along side lay leadership development, opportunities for which are sorely lacking. The magnitude and support for this initiative cannot be resourced by the present staffing configuration.

Goal: Support our Children and Youth.



MFUC comes alive when children and youth are part of things. Congregational life offers children and youth opportunities for community, intergenerational relationships and through faith and spiritual formation, a grounding in the sense of something more than themselves. All of these things are vital tools in the healthy formation of a future adult.

Action:

- i) Involve youth in intergenerational worship services;
- ii) Through sanctuary renovations, update the sanctuary so that a nursery area is more accessible;
- iii) Through sanctuary renovations, intentionally update the sanctuary so that it might more easily accommodate theatre productions; continue to do a community youth play of thoughtful and meaningful subject matter each year.

Timeline: Ensure that capital development aligns with these initiatives.

Action: Enhance staffing to the following:

- i) Minister of Worship, Spiritual Development and Community Partnerships
- ii) Minister of Family and Congregational Care

For example, one spiritual leader would take the lead on overseeing worship development, spiritual development and initiating community partnerships, as per some suggestions outlined throughout this document. It is anticipated that the staffing configuration consist of 1.5 FTE.

The second spiritual leader would take the lead on developing children's youth and family care and programming, as well as ministering to seniors and engaging in congregational care.

Between the two positions, worship leadership and funerals could be shared.

Timeline: Consideration as part of the 2020 budget deliberations.

Goal: Spiritual Development and Empowerment of Adults

Action:

- i) Introducing more spiritual practices through Council gathering, worship services;
- ii) Explore a new committee for "Spiritual Development" that could search out opportunities for training and development.
- iii) Continue encouraging and developing lay leadership opportunities such as Alpha,

Timeline: Within next six months

Goal: Community Outreach – Draw the Circle Wide

Action:

- i) Continue with Community Round Tables
Interest in the first community roundtable was extremely high, and this function is not being offered by anyone else. This increases MFUC's role as a community hub and allows for relationships to be formed and resources to be shared among community groups. Appointing someone or a group within the church to coordinate this initiative.

Timeline: Initiate as soon as possible

Goal: Open Church for More Community Use



The church and church house are community assets that we should take advantage of as a congregation.

As an example, many community and non profit organizations are in need of space at little to no cost in order to operate. This would also create an opportunity to provide space for youth to gather.

Basic infrastructure such as wi-fi is not always available to economically disadvantaged members of our community (e.g. computer lab and study space for children and youth who don't have access to this at home).

There are also limited opportunities for youth and adults to gather in the community in social settings (e.g. no pub, gathering café, or social club where unstructured social activities can occur).

Action:

- i) Undertake a space audit and evaluate the current usage of the church and church house space. E.g. size, usage, % of time used versus time available;

- ii) Charge the “use of building” committee with the task of establishing the policies for church use and considering opportunities for future use of the church and church house.

Timeline: Immediate – Six months

Goal: Create Opportunities to “Invite People In”

The opportunity to engage more with the wider community has several benefits, particularly from a social outreach perspective (e.g. a place for various age groups to gather socially in a safe, welcoming environment).

Action: Host a senior’s coffee house open a couple of mornings a week. This could be simple coffee and muffins. Someone would need to organize and put coffee on.

- i) Open the gym one night a week for young people.
- ii) Have our own “doors open” one Sunday a month and invite the public into our space – perhaps they might come to see it as a “quiet space” they can turn to.
- iii) Weekday morning for young Moms and Tots.
- iv) Also consider an outreach for families to come and use computers. There is a large empty classroom upstairs that could be converted. Consider a grant through United Church to help with this.
- v) Hosting a weekly community services hub with a focus on low-income people in the community

Goal: Join with area churches

Mainstream churches have declining attendance throughout Canada. A vibrant church requires a critical mass of worshippers. Perhaps one strong mainstream church in Mount Forest would have a better chance of long-term survival including opportunities to attract children and youth. This strategy will take time to build trust and the necessary relationship to ensure success.

Action:

- i) Develop a plan to reach out to area protestant churches;
- ii) Take advantage of current congregation members who have family, friends or connections within other congregations in order to reach out to these churches in a non-aggressive manner.
- iii) Start with shared congregational initiatives – both spiritually and socially

Timeline: One to two years

3. SANCTUARY RENOVATION



Many resources – financial and otherwise – have gone into the church building over the past twenty years. Therefore, we must make it as accessible, user-friendly and beautiful as possible. Renovating the sanctuary can have many outcomes – making it more welcome and usable, not only for worship but for the community as well, e.g. concerts, yoga, meditation classes. Worship services can be more dynamic, creative and spiritually formative. Youth theatre such as the 2018 production of “The Best Christmas Pageant Ever” as an outreach program.

Goal: To make the sanctuary more welcome and usable, not only for worship but for the community as well.

Action: The Sanctuary Restoration Committee has a draft plan. With the completion of the Strategic Plan, they will be able to finalize their plans and present them to Council and then to the congregation.

Timeline: Sanctuary Renovation Committee to present draft plan to Council and then to Congregation in early 2020.

Goal: Enhance our sacred space by displaying art, e.g. quilts specifically made to honour and celebrate the local landscape, or a new pulpit made from local wood or stone.

Action: Invite members of the congregation and local artists to display their art throughout the church building. Incorporate some of these arts and talents into the design of the sanctuary renovation.

Timeline: Early 2020 as renovation projects gets underway.

4. COMMUNICATION

It's important that members, adherents and community members have access to information on the activities of the church. Many strategies are currently underway to communicate with our congregation and beyond our walls. We should not lose sight of the fact that we have a diverse age population (e.g. not everyone is on Facebook or twitter). Communication materials can be leveraged across various platforms e.g. print, bulletins, social media, local broadcast media, electronic signage to reach those not currently involved with church activities. As an example, start a weekly radio interview show where local people and others are interviewed about their faith, spirituality and life.

Goal: Strengthen and build on the communication initiatives already underway.

Action:

- i) Develop a communication strategy that will coordinate communication from various committees and church activities;

Timeline: Within 12 months.

EDGE INTAKE ASSESSMENT – APPENDIX “A”



EDGE: A Network for New Ministry Development and Ministry Renewal

Intake Assessment Notes

Agenda

1. History and background of the congregation
2. The group's understanding of the current ministry and mission or identity of the congregation
3. Begin to design the next steps in the process of congregational development with EDGE.

Present

- Reverend Sheryl Spencer - has been at the church 3 yrs. (this is the 2nd year of her call)
- Patty Sinnamon, Chair of Mount Forest United Church Strategic Planning Committee, Chair of Worship Committee, Member of Sanctuary Restoration Committee, member of church for 28 yrs.
- Barb Schellenberger – Chair of Council, member of church for 30 yrs.
- Laurie Aitken – member of church for 22 yrs.
- Michelle Matheson – grew up in this congregation, has two children who participate (18 months and 4 years old)
- Harold Wollis – Member of Sanctuary Restoration Committee, has recently reduced his amount of committee work, was baptised at Mount Forest, has attended Mount Forest for most of his life, except for a relatively short period when he lived elsewhere
- Bob Richards - EDGE Missional Consultant

- Regrets: Larry Holtom & Campbell Aitken

- The adult children of most of those at the meeting, do not attend church except for key holidays.

Background on EDGE

EDGE is the United Church's network for ministry development. It has three practices:

1. Ministry creation
2. Ministry renewal
3. Legacy ministry to help congregations that have no other alternative, to close gracefully

In 1959 four new United Churches each week; in 2000s one church closes each week

- United Church – 2002 to 2012
- All main stream protestant denominations have declined in Canada since mid-1960s
- During this time there has been major societal changes
- It is important for congregations to understand that the challenging situations that they are facing are not their fault!

- What is necessary is to recognize these changes and respond to them by seeking God's calling for what the congregation is to be and do.

History and Background of the Congregation

1. Brief History

- Mount Forest – Woodland is a two-point pastoral charge. Woodland UC is a small country church that uses the Mount Forest church for funerals, weddings and other events. Woodland is not participating formally in the EDGE renewal process but is definitely considered a partner.
- Mount Forest United snapshot – average Sunday worship attendance – 100-110; average Sunday School attendance – 7-8; number of young families in the congregation – 6; balanced budgets for last two years.

2. The Surrounding Community

- Mount Forest has a population of about 4,000
- There are limited retail and other services – closest major shopping is Fergus about 40 minutes to the south (Guelph is another 23 minutes south)
- The town is surrounded by farm country. There are many local Mennonite farms
- There are 10 churches in town. Woodland United, the second point of this pastoral charge, is 10 km to the north east
- Employment: there are a mix of large industries (tractor assembly plant), local service employment and others commute (Guelph and Kitchener)
- Schools: Catholic elementary, public elementary and High School
- Young people – there are not lot of things to do, no place to gather other than coffee shops or restaurants
- There is a recreation centre, new arena and community park with a skateboard park

Issues

- Drugs and alcohol are serious problems with the youth
- 1/3 of the town population are vulnerable and have high needs. These people are transient, live in town, move away, return. This is seen in the schools. It was suggested that the low rents in Mount Forest attract these people who are a mix of those born in Mount Forrest and those from elsewhere

Relationship of the church with community

- The church provides a monthly, Sunday community supper – it provides a free meal and attracts a broad range of people
- There is an active ministerial that Sheryl participates in.
- The annual Christmas Hampers are a vital part of the community and the church offers space each year for the hampers to be put together.
- The church has a relationship with the local family health team
- The church is a member of the Hope committee (Healthy Opportunities Promoting Empowerment) which is an advocacy group for general health issues

What is the make up/demographics of the surrounding community

- There is a small proportion of Roman Catholics and very few visible minorities

The group's understanding of the current ministry and mission or identity of the congregation

1. Do you have a current vision or mission statement and if yes, how does it shape your overall ministry?

- *Essence Statement (developed in 2015 at an event hosted by Hamilton Conference):*
“Our community of faith exists as a gathering place for those who seek to follow Jesus on a dynamic journey of praise and service”.
- *Mission Statement:*
Reaching Up To God,
Reaching Out To People
- *Vision Statement (developed 12-13 years ago)*
God is leading us to accept the challenge to grow through faith, to prayerfully embrace change while caring for and reaching out to others, the way Jesus taught us.
- *The Essence statement is listed in the church bulletin and Sheryl finds it helpful. Otherwise none of the statements are used explicitly to guide church decisions.*

2. What are some words or phrases that come to mind when you think about your congregation?

- Elderly
- Old
- Affluent
- Staid – kind, uncomfortable with demonstrable actions in worship (for example if people clap during a hymn)
- Joyful

3. How would you tell someone outside of the congregation why you are a part of a faith community?

- It makes me feel good to be connected to people
- I never feel alone – this is very important for me
- I feel part of a faith family that provides me with support – I don't feel alone
- I receive renewal through music and fellowship
- Fellowship - after service fellowship time – this is growing – sometimes have a theme (i.e. food or birthday Sunday) – often don't need lunch afterwards
 - This is an important social time for older members
 - People are staying longer
 - Some of those who previously left right after the service are now staying
 - Sheryl often asks questions and invites small groups to discuss them in worship – this engages people in worship and provides seeds for conversation during the fellowship time

4. Describe a difficult time or time of transition for your congregation and how you moved through it?

- Have had a number of difficult times concerning the building: whether to build new building or restore the current; whether to repair the steeple.

- In mid-90's the church purchased a new property with the plan of building a new church and leaving the existing one. Eventually the congregation voted to stay and restore the current building. Some members left, the Minister resigned, the property was sold at a loss. There was conflict and some are still grieving this.
- Some believe that there are still palpable undercurrents but it is not spoken about.
- Presbytery provided assistance but it was not found helpful.
- There is a feeling that the congregation is gun-shy to discuss these issues.
- The congregation rose to the occasion and have nearly completed all of the renovations, only the sanctuary remains. \$1.7 million has been spent to date.
- Completing the renovations and considering property redevelopment with respect to the manse (3 storeys, 5-bedroom house currently used for a few offices, underused) and the Christian Education wing (contains 10 classrooms and a gym, very underused) may resurface some of these feelings.
- For the last two years the church had budgetary surpluses whereas before there were deficits. There was a sigh of relief from the congregation. Some people are concerned that they will slip back into deficits and are reluctant to approve new expenditures.
- Most members do not know that the church is financially healthy.

Begin to design the next steps in the process of congregational development with EDGE.

1. What is your dream for the congregation?

- Have enough people at worship to fill most of the balcony. The sanctuary seats 400.
- That people want to be here, to be part of our community, to be here when they are able to, given their busy lives (not necessarily worship) – feel supported by a community of people – be part of the broader community
- Want to do family ministry well – see more young families. Wonders what types of programs would attract families. Pentecostal Baptist had a petting zoo and bouncy castle at their welcome back Sunday in September. That church also attracted young families who left Mount Forest due to position of UCC on homosexuality.
- Like to see the church building used during the week – it is usually empty – there are a few rentals during the day and some community groups use part of the church in the evening (e.g. AA & family health group).
- Use the existing building infrastructure more – for example offer space for people to meet to have conversation or play cards instead of meeting at Tim's.
- Wonders if what we think is of value to young families or others, is what they think is valuable. For example, a baby sitting service.
- To get more people to volunteer.

2. What is a 'must' for you/the team out of the process with EDGE?

- To develop a plan to engage the community.
- Help to poll our community on its needs and how to start conversations in order to address these needs.
- Develop goals
- Investigate whether we can use our space to serve the kids and develop a real sense of community

- How to help with the serious alcohol and drug issues in the community
- Sheryl sees energy in the congregation to help in the community to address real needs. She believes that there could be some wonderful win-win-win situations (those in need, the congregation and the community). Wants help to identify these opportunities and how to move forward.

EDGE ONBOARDING REPORT – APPENDIX “B”



EDGE: A Network for New Ministry Development and Ministry Renewal

DRAFT - EDGE Onboarding Report
Mount Forest United Church
Mount Forest, Ontario

By: Bob Richards, EDGE Missional Consultant

Kris Tavella, EDGE Property Consultant

The EDGE Onboarding process is designed to help congregations highlight their current situation and understand whether they have the physical resources, internal capacity and Missional focus to successfully pursue a congregation renewal.

This Onboarding Report for Mount Forest United Church is based on the following information sources:

- Mount Forest UC EDGE Intake Assessment Report (November 14, 2017)
 - The following attended the October 4, 2016 intake meeting: Reverend Sheryl Spencer, Patty Sinnamon, Barb Schellenberger, Laurie Aitken, Michelle Matheson, Harold Wollis and Bob Richards - EDGE Missional Consultant
- Mount Forest UC EDGE Viability Reports Parts 2 & 3 (October 2017)
- Mount Forest UC Annual Reports (2015 & 2016)

The Onboarding Report is divided into the following sections:

A. Key Observations

Blessings

1. Stable Worship Attendance
2. Well Maintained and Renovated Building
3. New Part Time Child and Youth Ministry Animator
4. Significant Level of Investments
5. Actively Exploring Ways to be Accessible to the Community
6. Investigating New Governance

Challenges

1. Is There a Need for Congregational Growth?
2. Finding Time To Discern Their Vision
3. Unsure of How to Engage Community
4. Limited Potential for Property Development

B. Recommendations

1. Be Curious – What Would Excite Your Congregation and Neighbours?
2. Commit to Long Term Renewal
3. Seek Experienced Help

Mount Forest – Woodland is a two-point pastoral charge. Woodland UC is a small country church that uses the Mount Forest church for funerals, weddings and other events. Woodland is not participating formally in the EDGE Onboarding process but is definitely considered a partner.

Key Observations

Blessings

1. Stable Worship Attendance

- As shown in Viability Report #2, the total number of members and adherents (474 in 2016), average attendance at worship (110 in 2016) and average Sunday School attendance (4 in 2016) is stable. Attendance at worship declined in 2016 likely due to the passing away of eleven members in 2015. It should be noted that the number of regular identifiable givers (visitors excluded) has declined by 11% over the last four years. (Viability Report #2)
- Only about 20% of United Church congregations are growing or are stable in attendance and total numbers and so Mount Forest is currently blessed.
- “We are not seeing a decline in the congregation at the present time, but as our congregation ages, this may be an issue.” (Viability Report #2)

2. Well Maintained and Renovated Buildings

- The churches buildings include the following accessible facilities:
 - a sanctuary with a seating capacity for 400
 - a gymnasium with a stage and seating capacity for 225
 - a fellowship hall with capacity for 224
- There is also a CE wing with 10 classrooms and a former large manse which is used only for two offices.
- All of these are well maintained. A Sanctuary Revisioning Project is currently underway which will complete the church renovations, which to date has cost \$1.75 million. Each year the church receives about \$14,000 in response to a capital development letter sent to the congregation asking for support for the restoration fund.
- “We observe that when it comes to spending money on the building, the money is forthcoming, but when it comes to spending money on outreach it is often met with resistance.” (Viability Report #3). When the congregation comes together to complete a project, giving of time and money is generously forthcoming (raised \$35,000.00 in a short period of time to sponsor a refugee family, 1.2 million for restoration project, \$70,000.00 for our steeple repairs). (Viability Report #3)

3. New Part Time Child and Youth Ministry Animator

- The church hired a Child, Youth Ministry Animator for 10 hours per week. This is a significant step since it is very hard to grow the children, youth and parent’s ministry without dedicated support.
- The following statement is quite wise. Not only do our congregations face ageing seniors, they also face ageing youth. Too often we lose the parents of youth when they leave for college or university since we have not fully engaged them in the live of the church.

- “Life-giving is the work we do with children and youth, but at the same time can be life-draining in trying to be constantly creative in attracting and retaining youth or young families and finding a means to minister to them.” (Viability Report #3)

4. Significant Level of Investments

- “MFUC has a healthy investment fund in various Guaranteed Investment Certificates (\$225,000.00 as of December 31, 2016)”. (Viability Report #3) These funds can provide a cushion for ‘rainy days’ and can be used to seed new ministries which may be relevant to the congregation.

5. Actively Exploring Ways to be Accessible to the Community

- The following is the response to the question: Is growth necessary for the congregation to be viable?
 - “Growth is welcome; in particular younger families, but we would like to look at other sources of income.” (Viability Report #3)
 - “We continue to hold “Messy Church” events for young families. We are actively exploring more ways to be inviting and accessible to the community.
 - [we currently engage the community through:]
 - Family Health Team – weekly support group and other partnerships
 - Reaching Hands (AA) – weekly use
 - Sunday Supper – with prayer circle
 - Community Living – weekly use
 - Horticultural Society – regular meetings
 - Hospital Auxiliary – luncheons
 - Community Hamper
 - Funerals, funeral luncheons (members and community)
 - Raw Carrot Social Enterprise (new in 2017 – program has now commenced)
 - Praise God in Song (monthly music jam)
 - Pickle ball – weekly
 - Facilities available for family events (Christmas, anniversaries, birthdays)” (Viability Report #3)

6. Investigating New Governance

- The current governance model has a high administrative overhead. There are 88 Council and committee positions (83 filled) which represents 80% of the average Sunday attendance at worship. (Viability Report #2) EDGE is observing a growing trend, especially among younger people, that they want to make a direct difference through volunteering as opposed to sitting on committees.

Challenges

1. Is There a Need for Congregational Growth?

- The following statements may suggest that congregation growth, increased income from rentals and new ministries are thought of as being mutually exclusive.
 - “Growth is welcome; in particular younger families, but we would like to look at other sources of income.” (Viability Report #3)
 - “We have also identified that we have an abundance of space (both the Church building and the Church House) that could be used for further ministry. We anticipate that the strategic planning process will help identify what those ministries

might be and how our building assets can be a benefit to our community.” (Viability Report #2)

- “We need to attract more young families who will use more of our facilities. We have a large, furnished youth room which currently is not being used. The size, condition and expense of the building is currently sustainable, but we may be challenged in five to ten years.” (Viability Report #3)
- As we age and without an influx of younger families, we will struggle to remain financially stable. Our financial vision in creating our budget and managing our finances is largely focused on day to day expenses versus stewardship and communication.”
- “We see ourselves as a gathering place.” (Viability Report #3)

2. Finding Time To Discern Their Vision

- The above challenge be explained by the fact that it is hard for congregations to find the time, motivation and experience needed to consider their future strategically.
 - “It should be stated that we utilize both staff and volunteer resources to keep things running smoothly; however, we have not made space in our planning and meetings for visioning. We recognize that this needs to be addressed through the strategic plan.” (Viability Report #2)

- “We have so much to celebrate! And yet... If you look around our sanctuaries on a Sunday morning and project ten years into the future, it doesn't look so bright... The model that has served the church for so long - members and adherents come to church and make their offerings on Sundays which provide our budget - may not be sufficient for much longer. We may need to broaden our horizons in terms of what we do and how we do it, pondering deeply how we might be called to offer ministry in this community in this time and place.” (Minister's Message - 2016 Annual Report)

3. Unsure of How to Engage Community

- The following were identified as must haves from a process with EDGE:
 - “To develop a plan to engage the community.
 - Help to poll our community on its needs and how to start conversations in order to address these needs.
 - Investigate whether we can use our space to serve the kids and develop a real sense of community
 - How to help with the serious alcohol and drug issues in the community
 - Sheryl sees energy in the congregation to help in the community to address real needs. She believes that there could be some wonderful win-win-win situations (those in need, the congregation and the community). Wants help to identify these opportunities and how to move forward.” (Intake Report)

4. Limited Potential for Property Development

- The Property Scan prepared by EDGE assessed the attractiveness of developing residential housing on the entire church property. This is generally the highest valued use of the land in terms of property development. The scan looked at six development factors and concluded that “Land development opportunities don't show promising returns, the property is restricted due to the irregular lot shape and

lack of key development drivers. Additionally, current zoning by-laws allow for a maximum 40% Lot Coverage, which very much limits the creation of any accessory buildings.” (Property Scan p. 1)

- The property scan process does not assess opportunities for increased rentals or partnerships to utilize the building differently.

Recommendations

Engage Your Community to determine their needs.

- Congregation growth, new community-based ministries and increased building utilization are inter-related. The latter two help you to develop new ‘friends’. You already have ‘friends’ who help at church events but who do not attend Sunday worship. The opportunity is to make more friends, individuals and organizations, who may want to rent some of your facilities, who want to help you leverage your facilities for new ministries and who will help you with your mission, to volunteer and to give financially to specific missions. Some will join you Sunday morning; others will help you invent new forms of church meaningful to them. Fortunately, congregations generally do not have the resources to do mission on their own.
- A Community Round Table is an effective means to confirm community requirements and who you may want to partner with, including possible rentals for part of your building. One-on-one meetings with key community leaders can help determine who to invite to the roundtable and what issues to focus on. An EDGE vision day and the table talk process can compliment the roundtable process.

Be Curious – What Would Excite Your Congregation?

- Ask your congregation what is meaningful to them, what engages them in their faith, what would excite them to participate more in the life of the church. What words would they use to describe their church experience, not the activities and events they participate, but the experience they receive. This should be done in discussions with age cohorts since needs can vary by age and stage in life. This could be particularly useful for considering how to renew you family ministry.
- Congregations I have worked with have used spiritual practices and scripture to discern what they are called to be and to do. Not surprisingly they feel called to be disciples of Jesus and to help change the world through love, justice and peace, one step, one person at a time. However, this not necessarily a calling they are comfortable with given our 21st century, secular world.

Commit to Long Term Renewal

- Renewing your mission, exciting your congregation and engaging your neighbours is a long-term commitment. It often takes 5 to 7 years to develop significant mission, membership and financial results.

Seek Experienced Help

- You are not alone. EDGE, the United Church’s network for ministry renewal, is the leading provider of congregation renewal services in Canada. It has and is helping many congregation to discern their calling and to respond to it. While renewal is different for every congregation, based on its internal situation, the community it resides in and the specific call that they discern, there are common processes and a network of experiences that can be accessed and to help guide through renewal. EDGE will walk the path with you.

Viability Report Part 2 Data Collection

1. Volunteer Resources 2017

Board Council Positions

Position	# Needed	# Actual	Term
Council Chair	1	1	1 year
Vice Chair	1	1	1 year
Secretary	1	1	3 years
Worship Chair	1	1	3 years
Finance Chair	1	1	3 years
Mission and Service Chair	1	1	3 years
Membership & Fellowship Chair	1	1	3 years
Christian Education Chair	1	1	3 years
Property Chair	1	2 (Co-Chaired)	3 years
Use of Building Chair	1	1	3 years
Youth	1	0	3 years
Trustees	1	1	3 years
Member at Large	1	1	3 years
Presbytery Reps	2	2	3 years
United Church Women	1	1	1 year

2. Changes in Volunteer Positions

Board/Council Committees

Group Name	2017		2016		2015		2014	
	Required	Actual	Required	Actual	Required	Actual	Required	Actual
Board or Council	18	18	19	18	16	15	16	15
Committees								
Worship	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5
Finance	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4
Membership & Fellowship	6	6	7	7	7	7	7	7
Christian Education	5	2	5	3	5	3	5	3
Mission & Service	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Property	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Ministry & Personnel	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Use of Building	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	5
Trustees	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Sanctuary Revisioning Committee	7	7	7	7				
Capital Development	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Strategic Planning	7	6	7	7				
Communications	3	3	3	3				
TOTAL	88	83	88	87	70	65	70	65

3. Congregational Demographics

Total members and Adherents

Note: Total Members and Adherents for 2016 EQUALS Total Members and Adherents for 2015 PLUS New Members in 2016 MINUS Members Removed by Death in 2016

MINUS Members Removed by Transfer in 2016 PLUS Change in Number of Adherents in 2016.

	2016	2015	2014	2013
New members	7	17	3	0
Removed by Death	8	11	6	10
Removed by Transfer	2	0	2	1
Change in Number of Adherents	0	-2	16	0
Total Members and Adherents	474	477	473	462

Average Sunday Attendance

	2016	2015	2014	2013
Average Attendance at Worship	110	116	107	100
Average Sunday School Attendance	4	4	5	5
Number of Baptisms	5	2	0	3
Number of Funerals	16	12	6	13

Number of worship services each Sunday: One

Ages of the Congregation

Age	% of congregation
0-5	1.66
6-12	2.49
13-18	1.04
19-30	11.23
31-45	12.68
46-60	22.66
61-75	24.53
76-85	13.31
86+	10.40

4. Facility Features

Accessible Sanctuary with capacity of 400

Christian Education wing (10 classrooms)

Gymnasium with stage – Seating Capacity for 225

Large kitchen approved by local Health Unit – value of renovations to kitchen

Fellowship hall – Seating capacity for 224

Resource room

Upper Room (inaccessible) for smaller gatherings with kitchen

Former manse used as Church offices (Minister, Office Manager,) with kitchen, parlour and five bedrooms

Detached garage

Ample paved parking

Location – corner lot in downtown core

New digital sign installed in 2016

Memory garden with memorial stones and quiet contemplation area

5. Building Condition

Add information regarding projected maintenance costs to bring the building to standard. Add or remove items as relevant:

	Projected costs
Roof	New Roof in 2012
Windows	New Windows in some areas, Stained glass windows all refurbished in 2014-2015
Boiler and heating system	Replaced approximately 20 years ago
Flooring	replaced within last five years in several areas – fellowship hall, CE wing, Upper Room
Exterior walls	Re-bricking project completed in 2011
Plumbing	Small repairs (ie. washrooms in past 5- 7 years)
Electrics	Some electrical upgrades done as part of restoration
Sanctuary	Currently undertaking Sanctuary Revisioning Project
Washrooms	Washrooms have all been updated within past 5 years
Manse	Currently used as office –new roof in 2016, Minister’s office has new flooring and repainted in 2013

What Reserve Funds are Available for Capital Improvements?

\$172,172.0 (as at December 31, 2016)

Do you have a fund/process to receive special gifts for the building? If so, how much does it receive in a typical year?

Yes, we currently have a restoration fund. A Capital Development campaign letter is sent out annually. We receive an average of \$14,000.00 annually specifically for the restoration fund.

Do you have an engineer's report? Y/N Yes – it will be updated with regard to the sanctuary project

If so, please send a copy to append to the report. A copy of the last engineer's report is attached hereto.

Have you had any architectural drawings done in the past? Y/N Yes as part of the Restoration project

If so, please append to the report.

6. Financial Details

Surplus/Deficit for 2012-2016

Year	Amount Surplus or (Deficit)
2012	(\$ 4,839.91)
2013	\$10,251.33
2014	\$ 9,125.72
2015	\$ 9,782.28
2016	(\$9,024.63) This was a timing issue due to a transfer of funds raised to sponsor our Refugee family. It will be reflected as a surplus in 2017.

7. Financial Giving Patterns 2013-2016

Amount in \$	2016	2015	2014	2013
<100	54	37	61	56
101-499	64	69	63	61
500-999	37	41	40	38
1000-1500	27	26	29	27
1501-2500	14	11	10	7
2500-3000	4	2	1	3
3000-4999	4	6	6	7
5000 +	3	3	3	2

Number of Identifiable Givers (Visitors Excluded)

2016	176
2015	187
2014	191
2013	184
2012	197

Number of Identifiable Givers Includes Visitors:

2016	265
2015	242
2014	269
2013	255
2012	268

Ages of the Identifiable Givers and Amount of Contribution in 2016

Age	Number of Members and Adherents	Total Given in 2016 by Age Group	% Given in 2016 by Age Group	Average Amount Given in 2016 by Age Group *
0-5				
6-12				
13-18				
19-30	5	\$ 3,377.35	1.85%	675.47
31-45	6	\$ 2,565.00	1.41%	427.50
45-60	32	\$32,794.69	18.00%	1,024.83
60-75	57	\$64,917.73	35.64%	1,138.91
76-85	50	\$48,553.96	26.65%	971.08
86+	30	\$29,962.04	16.45%	998.73
Total	180	\$182,170.77		

*Note: calculate as the total given by each age group divided by number of members & adherents in each age group

8. Mission & Service Giving 2012-2016

Year	M&S Goal	M&S Giving	% of Target
2012	\$16,800.00	\$15,998.00	88%
2013	\$16,000.00	\$14,590.00	90%
2014	\$17,000.00	\$13,596.00	86%
2015	\$17,000.00	\$14,552.00	90%
2016	\$17,000.00	\$14,728.00	91%

9. 2017 Budget Breakdown – Financial Statements attached

Cost Item	2017 Budget	2016 Actual	2015 Actual	2014 Actual	2013 Actual
Salary	\$151,580.	\$131,484.	\$127,964.	\$120,868.	\$105,178.
Building Operation	\$ 27,389.	\$ 25,347.	\$ 38,673.	\$ 27,092.	\$ 24,469.
Ministry & Program	\$ 48,961.	\$ 36,970.	\$ 16,655.	\$ 15,871.	\$ 14,991.
Office Supplies & Admin	\$ 7,264.	\$ 6,253.	\$ 7,148.	\$7,634.	\$ 9,112.
Presbytery Assessment	\$ 8,451.	\$ 10,047.	\$ 8,731.	\$ 8,157.	\$ 8,251.
Total	\$243,645.	\$210,106.	\$199,171.	\$179,627.	\$162,001.

10. Investments/Trust Funds as at Year End (2016)

Name of Trust/Fund	Amount
Kindred Credit Union	\$100,000.00
Bank of Montreal	\$52,386.89
Bank of Montreal	\$75,000.00

11. Staff Review

Note: Add your responses to the white areas; modify the work activities as required and add additional rows if needed.

Staff Position #1 Position Title	Name of Staff	Hours Employed	Avg. Actual Hours Worked	
	Sheryl Spencer	40	50-55	
Percentage of Time spent on:	Worship	Worship Preparation	Pastoral Care	Family
	7%	37%	4%	8 hours per week
	Child/Youth	Community Engagement	Outreach	Stewardship
	2%	10%	2%	%
	Administration	Professional Development	Exercise/Personal Care	
	32%	6%	6.75 hours per week	
Staff Position #2 Position Title	Name of Staff	Hours Employed	Average Actual Hours Worked	
Office Manager/Treasurer	Annette Connolly	24	24	
Percentage of Time spent on:	Worship	Worship Preparation	Pastoral Care	Family
	%	20%	8%	%
	Child/Youth	Community Engagement	Outreach	Stewardship
	%	%	4%	8%
	Administration	Professional Development		
	60%	%		
Staff Position #3 Position Title	Name of Staff	Hours Employed	Average Actual Hours Worked	
Church House Custodian	Sarah Benson			
Percentage of Time spent on:	Worship	Worship Preparation	Pastoral Care	Family
	%	%	%	%
	Child/Youth	Community Engagement	Outreach	Stewardship
	%	%	%	%
	Administration	Professional Development		

It should also be noted that in addition to the three staff positions, a Church Custodian is contracted. Costs are reflected in the Building Operation budget.

12. Current Situation

This page is a summary of the current and overall situation of the congregation/church again a narrative style may be taken

Include points that would be relevant to understanding the viability of the congregation in terms of both volunteer and financial resources. Some examples include: changing volunteer base; staff positions and hours employed; financial stewardship (programs or congregational understandings); heating and insurance cost changes etc.

Mount Forest United Church Strategic Planning Committee has identified a gap in the age demographics between 19-30 and 60+, not only in volunteers resources but financial resources.

Staff – The 2017 budget includes the hiring of two part time positions. The first being an administrative assistant who will provide support to our Office Manager; and the second position being a Child & Youth Ministry Animator. Both positions are for ten hours per week.

It should be stated that we utilize both staff and volunteer resources to keep things running smoothly; however we have not made space in our planning and meetings for visioning. We recognize that this needs to be addressed through the strategic plan.

We have also identified that we have an abundance of space (both the Church building and the Church House) that could be used for further ministry. We anticipate that the strategic planning process will help identify what those ministries might be and how our building assets can be a benefit to our community.

PART THREE - REFLECTION / ANALYSIS SHEET

1. VOLUNTEER RESOURCES (BOARD / COUNCIL EXECUTIVE)

2. Has your Constitution been reviewed in the past 3 years?

We will be updating our Constitution and Governance Structure in 2017 as directed by our Church Council and Official Board.

3. Have you made changes to the Constitution in the past 3 years and have those been reviewed by Presbytery?

No

4. Are the “terms of office” of your Constitution appropriate to the current context of the church and are they adhered to?

Terms are not always adhered to – some individuals stay on committees for renewed terms. Council is currently reviewing the Constitution in 2017.

5. Looking at the “needed” and “actual” categories – are there positions not filled? If so, what are some of the factors creating this situation?

All required positions are filled. The nominating committee works hard to ensure that positions are filled and the congregation members are willing to step into various roles.

6. Is there a need to consider a different Governance Structure given the current culture of the church and context in which you are living?

We are reviewing the constitution to streamline the reporting by committee chairs. Currently some of our chairs report to both Church Council and Official Board. We are finding that people don't necessarily sit on committees, but are willing to participate in short term projects.

7. CHANGES IN VOLUNTEER POSITIONS (BOARD AND COMMITTEES)

a) Do the changes reflect the demographics of the congregation?

We may need to intentionally review our structure with a view to making participation accessible and welcoming to young adults.

b) Are “new” or different people taking positions or do the changes reflect an internal movement of people from one position to another?

Yes, we have had a few new people taking on positions both as committee members and as committee chairs.

c) Consider the total number of positions that are required for the Board/Council, is this manageable, sustainable over the next 3-5 year period?

There may be a feeling that the number of positions may be hard to fill in the future with the overlap of the role of Official Board.

8. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

a) Is there an identifiable pattern?

Mostly older population although we have seen an increase in younger families over the past year. We visit approximately 40 people who are shut in or in nursing homes.

b) Is growth necessary for this congregation to be viable?

Growth is welcome; in particular younger families, but we would like to look at other sources of income.

c) If yes to (b) then what steps are being taken to ensure this is happening?

We continue to hold "Messy Church" events for young families
We are actively exploring more ways to be inviting and accessible to the community.
Family Health Team – weekly support group and other partnerships
Reaching Hands (AA) – weekly use
Sunday Supper – with prayer circle
Community Living – weekly use
Horticultural Society – regular meetings
Hospital Auxiliary – luncheons
Community Hamper
Funerals, funeral luncheons (members and community)
Raw Carrot Social Enterprise (new in 2017 – program has now commenced)
Praise God in Song (monthly music jam)
Pickle ball – weekly
Facilities available for family events(Christmas, anniversaries, birthdays)

d) If the congregation is seeing steady decline, how is this or how will this effect the congregation in the next 3-5 years?

We are not seeing a decline in the congregation at the present time, but as our congregation ages, this may be an issue.

e) If the congregation is stable then how or why has this been the case?

Strong leadership in Ministry and in committees
We have intentionally been building up our infrastructure, as well as identifying and filling gaps. We continue to have conversations in exploring new ideas and best practices from other congregations.

We avoid conflict by having respectful communication with one another, at Council and committees.
There has been lots of laughter and fun through our journey.

9. FACILITY FEATURES

- a) Is there duplication of facility features with other UCC congregations or other denominations in the area?

There is a duplication of facility features with other denominations in our community. Several smaller United Churches near to Mount Forest have closed in recent years.

- b) If yes to (a) has this been considered in terms of shared activities, events, worship, stewardship?

Mount Forest has a strong ministerial committee – we do some joint Ecumenical Services
We are having conversation about Vacation Bible school partnerships with other local churches

- c) What features does your building have that might be unique to the community in which you live? How might this be considered in terms of mission in the community? In terms of congregational viability?

We have a large gymnasium with stage for community events, a large fellowship hall for various functions. We would like to explore how our physical assets might be used for community betterment. Our Christian Education wing is not accessible and is under-utilized. The sanctuary has excellent acoustics and has been used for numerous concerts by world renowned musicians. We see ourselves as a gathering place.

10. BUILDING CONDITIONS

- a) Are the community's context/needs considered with regards to building upgrades or capital expenditures?

Yes – we are currently undergoing a Sanctuary Revisioning Project and we have invited a member of the community to participate on the planning committee.
We also installed an elevator to the sanctuary.

- b) Is the size, condition and expense of the current building in keeping with the congregational demographic and projected demographic for the next 3 to 5 years?

We need to attract more young families who will use more of our facilities. We have a large, furnished youth room which currently is not

being used. The size, condition and expense of the building is currently sustainable, but we may be challenged in five to ten years.

- c) Will the maintenance of the building outgrow the congregational capacity (volunteer and/or financial viability)?

We are beginning to feel a little stretched in some of our volunteer committees such as property committee. We currently have a part time caretaker (contract position) and is affordable at the present time.

- d) If yes to (c) what is the time line and what are the implications?

Should our current caretaker retire or fall ill, this may alter our circumstances.

11. CURRENT SITUATION

- a) What might be listed as characteristics or qualities that make up the identity of this congregation?

When the congregation comes together to complete a project, giving of time and money is generously forthcoming (raised \$35,000.00 in a short period of time to sponsor a refugee family, 1.2 million for restoration project, \$70,000.00 for our steeple repairs). There is a strong sense of community both within the church and the community at large. Our church is quite respected within the community for the work we do (ie. Sunday dinners, community pantry, HOPE Committee. Many of the community leaders are members of our congregation. Music is very important to us – we have approximately 18 members in our choir and 6 members in our praise band. We have also been hosting a monthly “Praise God in Song” evening where we invite other members of our community to join us.

The building itself and its sense of history is important to us. The church is a well-loved landmark in our community and this was reflected in our decision to restore rather than build a new church elsewhere (early 1990’s).

We are a fun-loving congregation where creativity is well received.

There is some resistance to change such as when we have communion by intinction. .

- b) What patterns are reflected out of the “current situation”?

We observe that when it comes to spending money on the building, the money is forthcoming, but when it comes to spending money on outreach it is often met with resistance. We recognize that there is a delicate balance between tradition and faithful leading.

- c) How might these patterns be considered within a theological framework?

We are open to judgment for some of our decisions regarding the priorities that we maintain.

- d) What is life-giving? What is life-draining? What is God calling this congregation to?

Life-giving is when love shines through our congregation as the result of working together to help others. Our worship services are seen as a means to support congregants to go forth in the work that they do in the community. Life-giving is the work we do with children and youth, but at the same time can be life-draining in trying to be constantly creative in attracting and retaining youth or young families and finding a means to minister to them.

Life-giving is the relationship among our staff.

We feel that God is calling us to address our discomfort with change by strengthening our faith. God is calling us to engage in a much larger way with the community and community issues.

12. FINANCIAL DETAILS

- a) What is the pattern emerging?

Currently financially stable but as the demographics shift to an older congregation, this will change.

- b) What factors are creating the pattern?

As we age and without an influx of younger families, we will struggle to remain financially stable. Our financial vision in creating our budget and managing our finances is largely focused on day to day expenses versus stewardship and communication.

- c) What steps are in place to consider the pattern and address it in terms of viability?

Engaging outside consultation to assist in undertaking this strategic plan. We continue to have more and more conversation about stewardship and community outreach.

13. FINANCIAL GIVING PATTERNS

- a) Consider the numbers of people giving in each dollar category, what is the pattern re: numbers of people and dollar amounts? (i.e. very few providing a significant portion of the budget or an equal distribution)

The majority of givers contribute \$2,000 or less per year.

- b) What age demographic is responsible for the highest dollar amounts / for the lowest dollar amounts?

Highest Dollar Amounts - Age 60 – 75 Lowest Dollar Amounts – Age 21 - 45

- c) Considering your response to (b) has the congregation considered some of the research on generational patterns in the area of giving?

We have not considered any research on generational patterns in the area of giving.

- d) What is the pattern (over a 5 year period) of identifiable givers (declining / increasing)? What actions have been or are being planned to address this pattern in terms of congregational viability?

Givings have increased steadily over the past five years (\$143,907 in 2012 to \$158,277 in 2016); however, we are concerned that there are approximately 40 envelope numbers that have given \$0, and further only 3 families give over \$5,000 annually. We anticipate that our strategic plan will bring about discussion on the impacts of the relationship between givings for each age demographic versus long term sustainability.

14. MISSION AND SERVICE GIVINGS

- a) Have Mission and Service givings been affected by surplus/deficit budgeting?

M & s givings have increased from \$10,818 in 2012 to \$12,571.68 in 2016

- b) Is there a pattern emerging in M&S givings in response to decline or increased membership?

M & S giving have continued to increase annually since 2012

- c) What is the congregational history around M&S givings?

Traditionally the M&S givings have been generous. This is in addition to \$30,000.00 raised in a few short months to sponsor a refugee family.

- d) What importance does the congregation place on M&S as a part of its identity? What role might this play in terms of congregational viability or long range planning?

Very low key and yet our M&S contributions are significant.

15. BUDGET BREAKDOWN

- a) Is the budget a statement of maintenance or mission?

A combination of both – but more geared to maintenance. It should be noted that when a need arises, the congregation steps up to the plate financially (ie. steeple, restoration project, digital sign, refugee sponsorship)

16. INVESTMENTS / TRUST FUNDS

- a) What trends are being seen over a 3-5 year period in terms of drawing on Investments / Trust Funds for Operating Expenses?

The trust funds used for operating is for annual insurance premium.

- b) Given the use of Investments / Trust Funds, comment on congregational viability.

MFUC has a healthy investment fund in various Guaranteed Investment Certificates (\$225,000.00 as of December 31, 2016)

TABLE TALK SUMMARIES – APPENDIX “C”



EDGE: A Network for New Ministry Development and Ministry Renewal

2. Summary Table Talk Times #1 and #2

June 3, 2018

- **Questions: How would you describe the church to someone who has never been here before?**
- **Why do you or don't you give your time/money to the church?**
- **If you could change anything about the church or your role in it, what would it be and would it improve your involvement?**

June 10, 2018:

- **Are the worship services meeting your spiritual needs?**
- **How important is music to you during worship?**
- **In what way can worship involve more people from those gathered?**

Emerging questions:

* Beginning picture of congregational identity is one of welcoming, hospitable and inclusive (or a hope of being seen as inclusive), although perhaps somewhat insular, which I would approach by saying that these early results bode the question of your connection and/or understanding of and with your community (even, how would you define your community and where do you see yourselves in it?)

* Messy Church jumps out as one of your attempts to connect with the community - curious as to what their learnings have been from this experience, what you are understanding about the potential for ministry with families, children and youth; how you understand Messy Church, as a separate feeder stream of church or as a church unto itself

* As for so many, Stewardship comes to mind - again, what is your definition, how do you see yourselves giving to the church (to remain the same or to bring about transformation in directions that may not necessarily be comfortable - but then again, God's call rarely is too comfortable)

* Building - how is your building used? What feelings does it evoke to think about the building being used differently than it is right now? Also there seem to be some contradictory comments about accessibility and desire for the building to be used as opposed to being used too much/too full

* Human Resource Viability - is there a core group who "do everything" - what might God be telling you through this? Have you considered different options for being church or supporting the development of another church/mission: collaboration or helping to "seed" a growing ministry?

* The question, “Why do you or don’t you give your money to the church?” is really the beginnings of the most important question: “Why are we church?” or “What is God’s mission for us/with us?” How can you push exploration of this direction, beyond considering what is currently working or not? Again, what are the areas of collaboration or what does it feel like to even think about this, i.e.: turning outward, giving up some of who you are and looking beyond?

* Desire for Family, Youth, Young Adult Ministry - might wish to explore a process to look at your capacity and commitment to something in this area - Jill will follow up to get details about resources for this

* Worship - clearly much loved so how does this contribute to hearing God’s call and what are you hearing in the midst of worship about who you are as a community and a church? Also, regarding the rest of your spiritual practice, discernment - how do individuals approach this and how does worship support the spiritual practice of the community in tapping into your understanding of God’s call?



Table Talk Conversations Summary – September 30, 2018

- **Question: How would you restructure church committee work to encourage more participation in the life and work of the church?**
- **Question: What can we do that demonstrates our walk with Christ that would help us with our Mission Statement and Essence Statement?**

3. a) Emerging themes:

1. **Intergenerational focus** – clear understanding of the power and presence of intergenerational community
2. **Faith** – presence and purpose deeply connected to something “bigger” or to seeing and understanding God’s call in the world
3. **Outreach** – broad understanding of the importance of outreach through presence in and with the community
4. **Neighbourhood Partnerships** –again, a broad understanding of being present and welcoming to, and caring for, the community

b) Emerging Questions

i.) Governance

The Table Talk responses suggest that the congregation wants to create a more flexible, responsive structure that allows for participation by people who have not been involved previously, requires fewer meetings and shorter commitments. There is a desire to have more people involved but the respondents are not sure how to do that.

>This comes back to the earlier Table Talks consideration about human resource viability - is there a core group who “do everything” - what might God be telling you through this?

>What are different options for being church or supporting the development of another church/mission: collaboration or helping to “seed” a growing ministry?

ii.) Change

The responses identify a paradox or perhaps the presence of a spectrum that may be present within Mount Forest; the congregation is both responding to the challenge to adapt to the changing culture (“the inevitability of change”) and changing understanding of faith and, at the same time, resistant to the same changes.

>What would account for this paradox?

>How can you address the two ends of the spectrum?

A conflict exists between wanting to retain traditional ways of being church and accepting different ways of being. There is a push-pull of tradition versus “being more open to beliefs that don’t fit with our ideals”.

>How can the congregation continue to hold comfort and challenge in a healthy and faithful tension?

>What is the call to faith presented by this paradox?

iii.) Outreach and Neighbourhood Partnerships

A tension is present in the congregational identity in the movement or shift from a denominational (organization with an intent to accomplish something on behalf of God in the world) to a missional (community that is created and led by the spirit and that is called and sent to participate in God’s mission in the world) church; this can be identified in the different understandings of being welcoming or friendly to those who might find their way to the church and partnership/connection in and with the neighbourhood.

>What is the difference between being a welcoming/denominational church and a missional church?

>What does it really mean to love God and to love your neighbourhood?

>How are outreach and neighbourhood partnerships the same or different?

There is sometimes a distinction between a congregational understanding of neighbourhood partnerships and what it means to do outreach; outreach is often an extension of the congregation’s identity and “denominational” understanding of how the congregation can “do for” others. Whereas, partnerships may be considered to impact or suggest change for both partners as identities are reshaped within the engagement of the relationship.

> How does Mount Forest understand outreach and what type of outreach is compatible with the church’s identity and vision?

> How can you lift up or communicate who Mount Forest is and how your outreach reflects that identity?

> How strong is the desire to embrace a bold vision and to interact with the community?

> How does Mount Forest create partnerships and respond relationally in its interactions with groups such as Girl Guides and AA who use Mount Forest’s buildings? Is there an opportunity for ministry here?

c) Action possibilities

i. Belonging / Involvement

- Review the current governance structure (ensuring clear terms of reference and defined terms of office); refer to https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/handbook_models-board-governance.pdf as a resource.
- Possibly host a small group educational piece on “What is membership and understanding generational difference around giving and participation?”
- Leadership Development – again, possibly a small group or event/cohort offering training for congregational leaders.

ii. Communication / Neighbourhood Connections

- Work with Table Talk #3 Question #2: “What can we do that demonstrates our walk with Christ that would help us with our Mission Statement and Essence Statement?” to discern which suggestions are a good fit with Mount Forest and then prioritize and strategize how to implement the ideas.
- Review what Mount Forest does to communicate presence and purpose and discern what could be done (i.e.: social media presence, signage, visitation, expanding community dinners, etc.) to address lack of visibility, understanding of church and/or Mount Forest as part of the neighbourhood.
- Communicate that Church is about more than Sunday Services.

iii. Neighbourhood Partnerships

- Review the Community Round Table Report and compare the identified needs of the community to the suggestions in Table Talk #3 Question #2.
- Consider more and different involvement with the community.
- Develop partnerships with other organizations.

iv. Change Management

- Perhaps host a small group or event/cohort educational piece on change management and how to cope with loss of traditions and accepting change.

v. Intergenerational Focus

- Mount Forest has seen that it can offer programs that attract youth and that they can feel comfortable in the church sanctuary (i.e. Christmas pageant). Build on this experience and consider what other programs you might offer to youth.

vi. Visioning

- Although Mount Forest has a strong understanding of their identity, people remain uncertain about the future or how to live out their call to be God’s people in the world. It may be important to host a Vision Day focused on discernment and prioritization of items identified in The Table Talk Summaries and then, likely, through consulting sessions, to develop an implementation strategy.

COMMUNITY ROUND TABLE – APPENDIX “D”



Mount Forest United Church Community Round Table

Tuesday June 19, 2018

Facilitator: Jill Strapp, EDGE: A Network for Ministry Development, United Church of Canada

Mount Forest United Church held a community round table with community groups, other area churches and members from Mount Forest United Church. The purpose of the session was to discuss needs in the area, to identify challenges in delivering services to address those needs, and to explore how organizations might work collaboratively. The group also considered ways that Mount Forest United Church and its site might serve the community. A list of attendees is provided along with a copy of the agenda at the end of this document.

Patty Sinnamon, Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee at Mount Forest United Church welcomed everyone to the session and then Rev. Sheryl Spencer, the minister at Mount Forest, acknowledged the Territory. Jill Strapp, a facilitator with EDGE from the United Church of Canada invited the participants to introduce themselves and the group that they represent. Patty discussed Mount Forest United Church's role in the community and the church's desire to build connections and to look at ways in which the congregation and community members can work collaboratively to better serve those in community. The group was then taken on a tour of the church building and provided with an opportunity to ask questions about the space.

Following the tour, while participants were having dinner, Jill gave an overview about some of the major changes that united churches and not for profit groups are facing and elaborated on why we are holding discussions with our neighbours and seeking partnerships with the community.

Following the opening session, the participants met in five groups to consider the following questions:

- What are the challenges being experienced by those you serve?
- What difficulties are facing your group to successfully provide service?
- What plans and dreams does your organization have for the next three years or so, and how might others help you achieve those? How can Mount Forest United Church and this site serve community?

A summary of the discussions is provided below and all of the responses are included in the Appendix.

Small Group Discussions

What are the challenges being experienced by those you serve?

The participants identified a number of key issues in the community. The most frequently made observation was the need for community, highlighting that people are seeking a sense of belonging and connected. The significant lack of affordable housing in the community, challenges that exist because of economic disparity, including a lack of food and youth programs, as well as mental health issues were also highlighted. One group noted that a valuable community resource, a facebook page entitled “Mount Forest: What’s happening” may be found online at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/208144586330897/>. Among the round table’s observations:

- **Housing:** Affordable housing is a key need in the community.
- **Services:** The public does not always know what services are available and need assistance to access them, whether it is via computers or filling out forms. Some people are struggling to meet basic needs for housing and food.
- **Community:** People may be feeling a sense of loneliness and are seeking social interaction.
- **Mental health:** Services need to be expanded in this area to address adequately issues such as sexual assault, substance abuse and addictions, and suicide prevention.
- **Safety:** Some specific safety issues were mentioned, including cyber risk and domestic violence. The impact that violence children who are raised in those environments experience, including the generational impact, was noted.

What difficulties are facing your group to successfully provide service?

The community groups and churches serving the area discussed a number of similar challenges that their organizations face when providing service. Particular challenges identified include finding enough volunteers to run programs, a lack of both formal and informal mental health services and a lack of trust on both the service providers’ part and their clients. Some specific difficulties were identified:

- **Volunteers:** Fewer volunteers are available and acquiring and keeping them is a challenge. Cost is a factor when trying to advertise for volunteers and volunteers have to undergo police checks and training which may serve as barriers.
- **Mental health:** Overcoming stigma is a key factor for both providing service and for individuals seeking it. As well, the community lacks sufficient mental health services.
- **Space:** Community groups identified the lack of affordable space for meetings, confidential discussions and space that is adequate for their needs.
- **Access to services:** It was noted that there are hidden homeless within the community. Also, some people who really need assistance are not willing (or are uncomfortable) to seek help.

What plans and dreams does your organization have for the next three years or so, and how might others help you achieve those? How can Mount Forest United Church and this site serve community?

Plans and dreams identified include providing sufficient shelters for youth and for women experiencing domestic violence, providing bridges for individuals to get out of poverty, and putting in more support for end of life span. Improved mental health services featured strongly in this discussion, including providing respite for vulnerable people and removing stigma barriers.

Attendees identified a number of ways they might work together, including having networking lunches and skill sharing days. It was suggested that the municipalities need diversified planning for housing needs, including educating the community around getting behind this initiative.

Specific suggestions were made for ways in which Mount Forest United Church and this site could serve community. In particular, it was noted that the church's space could be beneficial to many community groups, for example by providing an off-site space for gathering or a space for sensitive communities to meet. Skill sharing days, providing community forums, continuing to hold community dinners and training volunteers in the community were all proposed. There was also discussion about how to meet religious and spiritual needs in the community, as the perception of the "church" is changing.

Next Steps:

Mount Forest United Church thanks everyone who attended the community round table and we appreciated your participation in the discussions. We look forward to continuing our conversations with you. The congregation will be following up on the items presented and considering ways in which we might further connect with the community.

If after reading this report you have any questions or reflections you would like to share, please let us know by contacting Patty Sinnamri at sinnamri@wightman.ca

Appendix: List of Attendees/Organizations at Community Round Table

Community:

Carol Armstrong	Cancer Patient Services
Karen Armstrong	Mount Forest Family Health Team
Tammy Ball	Parent Council Chair, Wellington Heights Secondary School
Michelle Bauman	Growing Abilities
Krista Blenkhorn	Mount Forest Girl Guides
Jacinta Cassidy	Rural Women's Support Program
Cheryl Cox	Birmingham Lodge
Mark Duesling	Pastor, First Baptist Church
Teri Dykeman	Big Brothers, Big Sisters
Helen Edwards	Seniors Centre for Excellence
George Harris	Woodland United Church
Tony Heir	Pastor Mount Forest Pentecostal Church
Donna Leach	Louise Marshall Hospital Foundation
Andy Lennox	Mayor, Township of Wellington North
Elsa Mann	Mount Forest Family Health Team
Aletha McArthur	New Growth Family Centre
Dawn McNabb	England Funeral Home
Jennifer Meeker	Principal, Wellington Heights Secondary School
Marg Mitchell	Woodland United Church
Robin Osborne	Minister, Letterbreen United Church
Daphne Rappard	Mount Forest Christmas Bureau
Lucas Rodriguez	Wellington North Youth Action Council
David Sharpe	Mount Forest Chamber of Commerce
Karin Sikema	Mount Forest Girl Guides
Dale Small	Township of Wellington North Economic Development Officer
Gaston St. Louis	Mount Forest Lions Club (not in attendance but had follow up meeting with Chair of Strategic Planning Committee)
Jill Strapp	Edge Consultant
Susanne Trivers	Mount Forest Family Health Team

Julie Vandeheuveel St. Marys Catholic School
Dave Watson Pastor, Mount Forest Pentecostal Church

Mount Forest United Church

Janice Benson, Chair Council
Virginia Byers Chair Missions and Service
Karl Ellis Strategic Planning Committee
Ron Harper Strategic Planning Committee
Sue Lawson Ministry and Personnel
Al Leach Finance Committee
Michelle Matheson Strategic Planning Committee
Bob McFarlane Sanctuary Revisioning Committee
Barb Schellenberger Strategic Planning Committee
Klaus Seibert Media Committee
Rhoda Seibert Pastoral Care Team
Rick Sinnamon Council
Patty Sinnamon Strategic Planning Committee
Sheryl Spencer Minister

Appendix: All comments by category

Multiple responses are indicated with a number in brackets.

What are the challenges being experienced by those you serve?

Connectivity / community

- Lack of social interaction
- Changing role of churches in community fabric - takes a “village to raise a child”; need to stay connected beyond childhood
- Churches: inconsistency of regular attendance / congregation
- Lack of a sense of belonging
- Lost the central point of community (used to be churches)
- Less looking out for others
- Negative issues in community - “evil” (i.e. lack of social interaction, poverty and housing issues)
- Involving the community - losing a whole generation
- Churches viewed as a place of worship, not a community with something else to offer
- Lack of respect - for self, for authority - teacher, parent, police, elderly
- Community outreach - more committed kids

Housing:

- Lack of housing overall
- Poverty / housing issues - “20%”
- Lack of affordable housing (2)
- Safe and affordable housing

Food:

- Food security
- Affordable and healthy food

Resources:

- Lack of knowledge to access what community has and government grants
- Need assistance to fill out forms
- Computer access and how to use
- Parenting skills - role models

Youth programs:

- Lack of youth programs and activities at reasonable cost and how to access them

Poverty:

- Poverty
- Low income and health concern limitations
 - Lack of affordability
 - Struggling to maintain basics of life

Mental health:

- Reaching out - mental health - ability / opportunity
- Apathy among boys / connection / mental health
- Lack of resiliency
- Mental health
- Substance abuse / addictions
- Suicide
- Sexual assault - current, historical

Seniors:

- Isolation of seniors
- Finances for seniors
- Seniors - transportation, social, food

Finances:

- Isolation and finances for single adults

Transportation

Safety:

- Cyber risk
- Domestic violence
- Children raised in these environments - generational impacts

Other:

- “Mount Forest: What’s happening” - facebook page with more than 2,500 members - very informative, provides community information
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/208144586330897/>
- Washroom signage lacking in Mount Forest United Church

What difficulties are facing your group to successfully provide service?

Volunteers:

- Acquiring and keeping volunteers
- Finding volunteer placements for disabled persons
- Volunteers! (2)
- Requirements that volunteers have to meet in order to volunteer, such as police checks and training
- Major need to advertise for volunteers - cost factor
- Lack of volunteerism
- Aging population
- Attracting volunteers - reaching people - how - word of mouth, newspaper, radio, social media

Mental health:

- Recognition of issues (mental health) - overcoming stigma
- Lack of understanding populations - e.g. poverty, mental health and addictions, rural and urban - stigma and stereotypes
- Openness around "mental health"
- Rural areas:
 - Lack of formal mental health services - i.e. only one counsellor in area
 - Lack of informal mental health services - i.e. bringing people together

Space:

- Affordable space for meetings
- Acquiring space - adequate space, appropriate space, confidential space

Transportation

- We are a rural community thus some of these challenges are higher priority (i.e. transportation)

Funding:

- Fundraising
- Funding - some is one-time; city based (e.g. bus passes)

Accessing services:

- Lack of trust on both sides - business and client
- Stigma

- Families not reaching out or “knowing” how to reach out for assistance
- Identifying their needs - education, spiritually

Connection:

- Actual conversation versus social media devices
- Creating a “common purpose”
- Family / broader family communication
- Loss of neighbourhood feeling / connection
- Building on positive “rural” friendliness

Involvement:

- Numbers (members)
- Lack of interest to be involved
- Not enough interest from younger generations
- Not in my backyard

Access to services:

- Those that really need assistance / service stay out of the limelight - not willing (or do not feel comfortable) to seek help
- Limited by confidentiality act to access services
- Lack of awareness about newcomers to the community (do not know who new people are so unable to welcome them - no equivalent to old “Welcome Wagon”)
- Privacy laws affect contacts
- Local - community based services - getting access to these
- Isolation
- Hidden homeless
- Access to long term care

Other:

- Insurance issues
- Educational opportunities beyond formal education
- Leaders
- Time
- Church has to put itself out there to continue to attract others
- Today’s society - both parents working, shift work, Sunday seen as just another day
- Maintaining a workforce

What plans and dreams does your organization have for the next three years or so, and how might others help you achieve those? How can Mount Forest United Church and this site serve community?

Mental health:

- Increased supports for mental health
- ACE (Adverse Childhood Experience) screening tool used to measure childhood trauma
- Respite for vulnerable people - therefore trust factor needs to increase
- Remove stigma barriers
- Increased placement and activities for the more vulnerable
- Accessibility for everyone for treatment and services

Support services:

- Shelters - for youth; for women experiencing domestic violence (sufficient numbers)
- Bridges out of poverty
- More support in place for end of life span
- Grow the amount of care in the community

Community connections:

- Community hub
- A need to be connected
- Role for Letterbreen UC in broader community - one priority need
- New values: be kind and learn
- Grow the amount of care in the community
- Become more engaged

Inspire:

- Create safe and positive environment for youth
- More role models (young adults)
- Impact children, youth, young adults to raise up the next generation of members

Other:

- Housing - safe and affordable
- Police now first call for everything - wish to tip scale to be called for police work rather than as a first point of call for all needs
- How do we balance between youth needs and meeting needs of older persons?
- Grow and bring in more members

How might others help you?

Education:

- Educate community around getting healthy

Connections and sharing:

- Connections in the community
- Having conversations about simple things to increase wellness; health, spirituality
- Drop denominations and just care
- Networking lunches
- Practical - accessible meeting spaces
- Skill sharing days - financial management, cooking

Planning:

- Municipalities need diversified planning for housing needs - educate community around getting behind this

Other:

- Keeping an open mind around youth (busting stereotypes)
- Bulletin board usage for community groups
- Attitudinal change is necessary - how do we make this happen? Keep it simple, small and local
- ** Need to ask people in need what they want

How can Mount Forest United Church and this site serve community?

Space:

- Use of Mount Forest United Church facilities for special occasions
- Off-site space for gathering
- Community / municipal awareness of space opportunities at the church
- Letting community know about available space
- Open the doors and provide space for sensitive communities

Education:

- Community forums: local and focused i.e. seniors, youth
- Personal expertise within congregation
- Skill sharing network / days

Youth:

- Youth preparing hot affordable meals for seniors - 'café'
- Spreading the word about youth action council
- Youth justice system

Religious and spiritual:

- Overcoming doctrine
- Talking about these issues
- Drop denominations
- The church should still keep church first
- Changing perception of the "church" - old guard versus modern opportunities; managing a changing perception
- Church and state
- Maintaining positive relationship - even if long time absence from a "church" community
- Less "religion" - more spiritual interaction, more spiritual focus
- All community churches
- Church as another "service group" - engaging real estate companies with community information package
- Communities change so organizations have to change, including church
- Church - role as centre of social services - fill gaps

Connecting:

- A system to check in on people who don't come to church for a while
- Participate in different coffee hours; drama programs
- Connecting with Good Neighbour Program
- Training volunteers in the community - positive engagement, positive connection
- Victim services - volunteers, place to meet with clients
- Volunteers
- Continue community dinners
- Birmingham Lodge - needs volunteers to lead residents in worship - does not have to be on a Sunday
- Community guide - insertion of information

VISION DAY REPORT – Appendix “E”

Mount Forest United Church

Vision Day

January 19, 2019

Facilitator: Jill Strapp



EDGE: A Network for New Ministry Development and Ministry Renewal

Executive Summary

Mount Forest United Church held a Vision Day on January 19th, 2019. Thirty-one congregational members attended it to discuss the church's gifts, look at its mission within the wider community, and think about the church's vision. After lunch, they completed an individual activity to consider next steps for Mount Forest and suggest where and how they might like to spend their time, energies and talents going forward. These ideas were then shared with their table groups and key ideas were presented to the group as a whole.

Vision:

The church members explored the question of "What is emerging for you as to God's call?" and proposed ideas that they would like to consider exploring further. These ideas can be grouped into two categories: initiatives particularly focused on Mount Forest United Church and expanding partnerships with the wider community.

1. Work on initiatives for Mount Forest such as:
 - Renovating the sanctuary to make it more multi-purpose;
 - Adopting a new governance structure;
 - Improving communications both within the church and externally;
 - Focusing on spiritual development through exploration of scripture, Bible studies, promoting each individual's faith journey and spiritual growth.

2. Expand partnerships and outreach, for example by:
 - Promoting community dinners by delivering flyers to local neighbourhoods
 - Hosting additional community round tables;
 - Offering a Kids' Night Out program to provide parents with a night off;
 - Connecting with youth in the community and offering programs of interest to them;
 - Collaborating with other faith groups and/or cultural groups;
 - Continuing to support the key Outreach projects with which the Church is involved;
 - Opening the church for community use - be a hub!

The congregation is blessed with a beloved minister, strong leadership, capable volunteers and a lovely asset in its building. It also has an opportunity to embrace possibilities for growth, expanded ministry and to become more outward-looking in its approach while connecting with the wider community. This may lead to some very exciting changes and the development of new, meaningful relationships on the congregants' faith journey.

Background

Mount Forest United Church is developing its Vision for the future and strengthening its connections with the neighbourhood. The congregation is considering how to shift from being a denominational church that is inward-looking to becoming a missional church that looks outward; this is an expansion of our understanding of 'church' that traditionally focused on the gathered community to living our lives of faith wherever we might be and in connection with others in the wider community.

The church held a Community Round Table on June 19th, 2018 which was attended by more than 35 people representing a good cross-section of social service agencies and Mount Forest's members. The event was enthusiastically received by both the representatives from the agencies attending and the church community, and participants actively engaged in questions about area needs and how to address some of the issues collaboratively. The Mayor subsequently talked about the round table at a Town Council meeting, noting the importance of having community groups collaborate with one another, and Patty Sinnamon was contacted by ***. As part of its visioning process, the congregation may want to continue to pursue connections made at the round table and to consider hosting additional ones in the future.

Congregational members participated in Table Talks in June and September of 2018. This was a congregationally led process in which two to three questions specific to the congregation and their missional possibilities were put out on each table. Through an informal process, members elected to participate in one or more weeks of the Talks, self-selecting at which table to sit and how to enter the conversation regarding the prepared questions.

The questions included reflections on why people give time and/or money to the church, if worship services are meeting their spiritual needs, ways to involve more people in worship services and what the congregation can do that demonstrates your walk with Christ that would help us with your Mission Statement and Essence statement. The responses to these questions and the themes that they raised are incorporated into this Vision Day report.

Vision Day

On January 19th, 2019, 31 congregational members gathered together to spend the day discussing the church's gifts, looking at its mission within the wider community and thinking about the church's vision. The morning began with a few icebreakers for members to get to know one another better, followed by a spiritual practice that included a session of Dwelling in the Word. The participants had insightful discussions and asked questions about the scripture passage, Luke 10, verses 1-9, reflecting on the scripture reading and engaging in conversations within small groups about its message.

Following a morning break, participants considered Mount Forest's identity, and then participated in a session that involved thinking about the wider community served by the church. This was followed by group sessions to discuss their vision for the congregation and where and how they might like to spend their time, energies and talents going forward. In the afternoon the members completed a "4 Box -

Concrete Steps” exercise individually to answer questions about “what is God calling our church members to be and to do?” They also thought about resources and leadership needed to make the vision happen, potential obstacles and how these might be overcome as well as a timeline for undertaking the initiatives. Group and individual responses to the table sessions are included in the Appendices.

IDENTITY: Who is Mount Forest United Church?

When asked about who we are, we can reply in many different ways. We can list our physical assets, we can talk about the things in which we are interested and active; we can share our personality traits and the characteristics that make us unique.

When describing Mount Forest United Church, members were very engaged in noting what makes the church unique. Among their blessings:

- Their minister, Rev. Sheryl Spencer, who “feeds the soul” and leads the congregation in meaningful worship services.
- The church is a regional hub for faith education and spiritual learning.
- Strong, talented ordained and lay leaders who are active in both the church and community - strong, excited, passionate leaders.
- An abundance of talent that is shared - ministry leadership, choir director, choir, praise band.
- Members who are striving to be spirit-filled and a family that follows Christ’s values, beliefs, and fellowship.
- A nurturing, supportive family of caring people who like each other and get along.
- An up-to-date building with good space, acoustics and location that serves as a spiritual place as well as a community place.
- They provide ministry through their weekly television programming and radio broadcasts.
- Strong outreach programs, including community dinners, movie nights, a history of social activism, the Raw Carrot program, Hope, and the refugee program.
- Good leadership in the UCW which provides wonderful food at funerals and luncheons.
- Some community groups use the building on a regular basis, including Scouts and Brownies and Pickle ball.

The discussion groups noted some questions to consider, including:

- How can we change? - others need a voice
- How can we be comfortable with being uncomfortable?
- What can we do??

Three groups developed “elevator pitches” to describe Mount Forest United Church:

“We join together to break bread, laugh, grow and support one another; we are about more than just Sundays.”

“A welcoming, community-minded congregation within a diverse and nurturing environment; we strive to be more like Christ through worship, prayer and praise and caring for our neighbours and extended community.”

“We are a faith-driven community church aspiring to make a difference within ourselves and our community.”

MISSION: Engaging in God’s Mission

American Theologian NT Wright says: “The church exists, in other words, for what we sometimes call “mission”: to announce to the world that Jesus is its Lord.” (Simply Christian by N. T. Wright, 2006, p. 204). To know the community and its offerings and needs is important for us as a church because it expands our understanding of God at work in the world. There are opportunities to connect with what God is up to in the community and further afield.

When asked to consider what God is up to in your community, the responses ranged, from not being sure about what He is up to because He is operating through all of us - whether in church or not, to the volunteerism within our community which demonstrates love for one another. Examples of this include instances when the community has come together in times of need and the speed by which funds were raised to sponsor a refugee family. Others said that God is up to lots of wonderful things, and not necessarily through churches.

People see life and energy in many places, including:

- Nature - trails
- Projects - WWWishes, Christmas bureau, splash pad, skills day
- Good news “true evangelical faith cannot lie dormant”
- Community dinners, men’s breakfast
- Activity and energy within the senior community
- Energy exists within the youth but they need direction and help to channel - theatre, music
- Sports complex
- Our congregational members are involved in other service-minded organizations, mission and outreach work
- We represent Christ in every committee, community group we participate in
- Sports
- Youth - new ideas, energy

They also asked questions, such as:

- Church - how do we draw them in? What do we have to offer? What is our drawing card?
- Are we trying to do God’s job?
- What are we doing to be available and let his “plan” happen - how can we represent Him the way He taught us to do?

Numerous service groups serve as wonderful assets to the community. Some of the key organizations are noted in the table below:

Social assets/services:

Social clubs - youth, seniors	Toastmasters	HOPE/Recovery
Service clubs	Raw Carrot	Girl Guides/Scouts
Community pantry	Pickle Ball	MOPS
Youth groups	Hospital foundation - Thrift shop	ICPS
Sports Complex	Seniors Activity - less for younger adults	MFUC
Coffee ‘clubs’	Legion/Lions	Holstein/Optimists
Schools	Radio station	Big Brothers/Big Sisters
Cadets	Sports - hockey, soccer, baseball, etc.	Arena - walking track
Men’s breakfast	AA meetings	Movie night
Bowling alley	Churches - community suppers and luncheons	Food bank
Fireworks festival	VON	Meals on Wheels
Refugee committee	Healthcare workers	Teachers
Cancer patient services		

- There is a “can do attitude” in the community.
- There is a significant commitment of people and resources (time and money).
- Various groups are willing to come together for conversation.

Needs/Longings:

The following needs and longings were identified by the congregational members:

- Still too small town, conservative.

- Too few refugees, linking to a larger world.
- “Too much harvest, not enough labourers”.
- Organizations within communities do not always connect with each other.
- Smaller groups - disadvantage is not enough to run programs sometimes; would like to think that intergenerational connecting is possible.
- To be accepted - socially accepted with like-minded individuals.
- Learning to walk a journey as a believer (studies) and from each other.

Mental health:

- Lack of hope in the community
- Loneliness/social isolation
- Addictions
- How do we present mental health support?

Housing:

- **Lack of affordable housing**
- Homelessness
- Seniors housing and social isolation

Gathering places:

- Gathering spots in community (Tim Horton’s and Under 6 soccer (120 kids))
- No gathering places for younger people
- Opportunities for adults to gather and socialize
- Adult social clubs
- Seniors’ cards

Financial resources:

- Poverty
- Lacking financial resources
- Lots of jobs, not enough employees

Volunteers:

- Volunteers with organizations in community - aging
- “Aging out” of helpers

Youth:

- Adolescents and teenagers - activities

- Apathy in youth
- Find a way to engage youth - safe and accepting environment, can we be a lighthouse for them? How?
- Praising through song - music to reach people - youth

Parents:

- Night out - no kids - Friday or Saturday night day care

We need to ask questions:

- How can we help?
- How do we connect with the people with needs?
- How do we provide for the homeless?
- What can our role be?

Many of the same needs were identified and emphasized at the community round table, including the need for affordable housing, people seeking social interaction, mental health issues and the need for more services to address those. The congregation may want to reflect on these needs and how they might work with partners to strengthen their connections with their community.

Specific suggestions were made for ways in which Mount Forest United Church and this site could serve the community. In particular, it was noted that the church's space could be beneficial to many community groups, for example by providing an off-site space for gathering or a space for sensitive communities to meet. Proposals included:

- Skill sharing days
- Providing community forums
- Continuing to hold community dinners
- Training volunteers in the community
- There was also discussion about how to meet religious and spiritual needs in the community, as the perception of the "church" is changing.

VISION: What is emerging for you as to God's call?

The church faces challenges in our changing socio-cultural time. It is a transition to a culture of exploration and questioning; collaborating and working together on new ideas; working for causes that make a difference in our community and world. Most likely the church will not exist as it is a generation from now; it will look and be different, however, we still have an important role and our task is to discern what that role is. For the church, this means that change is afoot as you create a place of spiritual belonging where people of all ages can share in life's journey, and as you are/become that place, the challenge is to communicate and share who you are with each other and let others outside your church know.

We often think that success is measured by the number of people in the pews. How might we shift our thinking to consider the ways in which people grow in faith? We do not have to 'fix' the church. We can work to rejuvenate the church. Rather, we may wish to think positively and to ask "What is our priority?" and "What needs to be done to make it happen?", to listen to the spirit and act without fear, to balance moving ahead without forgetting our traditions.

Participants commented that the congregation should consider what we have now and take a deep look into what we have to offer and if the programs and space can be used differently. Assess what is working and focus our energy on these. Drop things that are discouraging people.

When asked about their vision for their church, there was significant agreement amongst the groups about the need to reach out to the wider community. Participants talked about:

- Making ourselves known to the community.
- Recognizing that we need to serve, not just those in our congregation, but the wider community.
- As church we show leadership in areas of social justice and community nurturing.
- Being social justice advocates/disciples within our community.
- Having a desire for more flexibility and empowerment in our church and community journey.
- Determining the greater need of the community.

Spiritual growth:

- Cultivating the continuation of church by creating opportunities for people to explore a faith journey.
- Keeping our own spiritual cup filled.
- Continuing with what we are doing, but being mindful of not getting burnt out.
- Bearing in mind that "God is not keeping a report card" - being thankful for what we have.
- Having enough faith in our own beliefs.

Inviting the community to participate:

- Actively inviting the community into the church to participate in ongoing projects such as community dinners and messy church.
- Using social media to 'educate' the community about MFUC - break barriers about church - we are love, peace, care.
- Opening the church for daycare or babysitting programs.

It may be helpful to consider taking on smaller projects or experiments that are not too daunting and that fit with your community's needs and congregation's energy and interests. Some examples:

- One congregation hosts a community bonfire each week in the summer which involves gathering on the front lawn, singing songs and roasting marshmallows.
- Another congregation noticed that parents were rushed at the end of the day when picking up children from the daycare in their building. They hired a community chef and offered meals at cost to harried parents to take home with them.
- In order to connect with their renters, one church invited its renters to speak to the congregation during service one Sunday to explain why they do what they do.
- A church that wanted to connect with millennials reached out to them to ask what interested them. They now meet once a month to volunteer at a local supper program and then gather at a pub to discuss spirituality.
- One church started a weekly drop-in program for toddlers and caregivers. It was initially run by volunteers but grew to the degree that they obtained a grant through “Embracing the Spirit” to hire a coordinator for six hours per week to run the program.
- Another church offers a very popular memoir writing program over a six week period on Wednesday or Sunday afternoons.

Grants are available for new initiatives through the United Church’s “Embracing the Spirit” program. Mount Forest received one in 2018 for its Christmas pageant which was reported by participants to be “the best pageant ever”. Congregations can apply to this program more than once.

In order to select the top priorities, the planning group may wish to narrow the list down by selecting about five to eight ideas to present to the congregation and then use weighted voting to pick the top three choices. Suggestions for how to undertake a weighted voting process are included in the “Next Steps” section of this report.

Initiatives

1. **Board governance:** Examine Council structure and committees for efficiencies and effectiveness. It was suggested that it would be helpful to reduce council’s number and encourage members who are under 40 to participate on committees or specific events. It is sometimes easier to ask people to take part in a project that requires a shorter commitment than to request that they commit to ongoing committee work. This work is already being undertaken and the change proposal to the constitution needs to be presented to the congregation.
2. **Spiritual development:** Participants expressed interest in learning more about scripture and the historical and geographical contexts in which it is written. Others proposed having Bible-focused learning and study sessions. Continue to create a sense of belonging and spiritual presence, and to re-invigorate the congregation in the depth of their faith journey. Continue to support our minister. Encourage others to share in worship services; promote each individual’s faith journey and spiritual growth.

3. **Children and youth:** Many ideas centred on how to connect with the younger generations and this area seems to be a priority. Suggestions include:
 - Building on Messy Church.
 - Setting up a Kids' Night Out (parents drop off children for 2 hours of supervised games, play and dinner while parents have the evening off).
 - Having monthly childcare with Biblical education - e.g. Messy church at night.
 - Hosting bridal and baby showers.
 - Holding a parents' night.
 - Finding a place to connect with kids and youth; be part of a local meeting house for youth-organized activity at an outside location.
 - Set up a youth or kids' drop-in centre.
 - Setting up youth theatre.

4. **Join with area churches:** It was suggested that there could be one strong main-stream Protestant church for Mount Forest and the surrounding area. Consolidating with other churches may allow for two services on a Sunday - early/late; modern/traditional. Speak with or gather leadership of other churches to determine interest in shared initiatives, such as shared services or special events. Perhaps host a youth event with all area churches?

5. **Outreach:** Maintaining and supporting existing programs, such as the community suppers, music ministry (choir, praise band, worship evenings), the prayer shawl ministry, the Raw Carrot, and continued support of the school in Kenya were mentioned. One idea for expanding the community dinners is to map out various neighbourhoods and issue invitations. It was suggested that the congregation should focus on reaching out rather than luring people in.

Other ideas include:

 - Re-visiting the refugee committee.
 - Hosting a women's conference.
 - Hosting a coffee house or games' nights for seniors, youth or a combination of the two.
 - Engaging youth in activities that are outside of the "church".
 - Connecting with other churches in the area to share resources.

6. **Renovation:** There is support for continuing the plans for the re-visioning of the sanctuary and modernizing it to allow for flexibility - performances, flexible seating, accessibility, café-style worship, worship in the round. Re-work the sanctuary to be more community friendly; take away limitations of pews and the screen that blocks the choir. Another suggestion about making church house a hub — renovate it or sell it! Open doors and be that hub!

7. **Facilitate additional community round tables:** The reception to the round table that was held in June 2018 was very positive and a good opportunity for community groups and members of the congregation to learn from each other. The organizations would be happy to repeat the

experience. Perhaps hold round tables on specific topics, such as seniors, housing, mental health, etc. and invite specific groups to attend those.

8. **Communication:** The importance of communication both within and outside of the church was mentioned by a number of participants at the Vision Day. The church's website is helpful but a social media presence could be established. Set up a Facebook account, a twitter account and /or an Instagram account. Post photos from events as they happen. Make the website more interactive (e.g. include a link to Facebook account, other social media accounts). Set up a blog. Keep in mind that social media needs to be relational and someone needs to be responsible for interacting with the community on an ongoing basis.

Other ideas include using emails and teleconferencing to get millennials involved with specific events; using media, such as radio, television, the website, and social media to promote events. Start a radio campaign inviting new people to come out. Share today's information with the congregation - provide a presentation at AGM.

9. **Open the church for community use:** There was much mention that the church building is an excellent asset. Consider opening the doors more during the week and providing space for free wifi usage and quiet contemplative study. Make more use of the church for community events.

Significantly, although in the earlier part of the day when groups were asked to describe "Who is Mount Forest United Church?", responses indicated that the congregants are willing to undertake change, this perception was challenged by many in the "4 Box Concrete Steps" exercise. In the written exercise, people suggested that fear of change remains a significant obstacle; a range of comments are provided below:

- Fear of change, traditions, resources;
- Fear of failure;
- It's okay "to think outside of the box";
- Be open to other's ideas;
- Accept and embrace change;
- Refusing to accept change - things are fine;
- Disagreement, nay-saying;
- My own resistance to radical change from tradition;
- Conservatism; holding onto the past, building, traditions;
- Fear of something new

This fear of change or reluctance to embrace it was identified previously in a Table Talks session and warrants further consideration. Adjusting to change is not easy and the fast pace of change in today's society may make people uncomfortable or reluctant to try something new. Often, church provides comfort for people in that it is an area that has stayed the same. It might be helpful to engage in some change management work before undertaking significant initiatives.

Additionally, ensuring that all changes are communicated thoroughly, as early as possible and through all channels of communication (email, news bulletins, in-person, town hall meetings, etc.) will help people to overcome fears about change. Acknowledging sadness and loss when routines are changed is also essential.

NEXT STEPS

“Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase.”

Martin Luther King Jr.

This report is a compilation of all of the participants’ ideas and questions generated at the recent Vision Day. The major themes which became apparent are:

- Neighbourhood partnerships: making ourselves known to the community and recognizing that we need to be present and welcoming to, not just those in our congregation, but the wider community;
- Faith and spiritual development: fostering spiritual growth by cultivating the continuation of church and creating opportunities for people to explore a faith journey;
- Outreach: actively inviting the community to participate by inviting them to ongoing activities such as our community dinners and messy church, telling them about who we are and opening the church for various programs.
- Intergenerational focus - connecting with children, youth in our community as well as recognizing the power and presence of intergenerational community.

The document outlines potential next steps in the conversation of change and spiritual growth. Members are invited to look in detail at each of these areas and consider how they might approach the discussion. It will be important to prioritize to determine where to focus energies first. Another consideration are the findings from the Community Round Table, keeping in mind what needs exist within the community and how Mount Forest might collaborate with other groups and organizations.

A follow-up step would be to circulate this report and the ideas generated and to have people consider which themes or topics they see as a priority for the congregation to undertake in ministry going forward. As mentioned previously, it would be wise for the planning team to pare down the options to a more manageable number, such as five to eight initiatives.

One way to obtain this input would be to have the name of each topic displayed on the wall in various places around the room and have people physically go and stand beside the one in which they have interest or an ability to contribute. Once gathered it will be clear where the energy and interest lie. Alternatively, people could be provided with two or three dots to stick on the top two or three themes they see as a priority. Another idea would be to give people a list of the initiatives and ask them to rank them in terms of priority.

The planning team must communicate clearly throughout the whole process. People desire information and the opportunity to offer feedback, as indicated by the thoughtful and committed members who attended the Vision Day, actively engaged in discussions and filled out forms with their comments. Open communication is vital to introducing anything new or entering more deeply into a time of change.

Mount Forest United is a dedicated, older, traditional worshipping community with a strong outreach program, committed leaders, excellent minister and dedicated volunteers. Cherish these gifts as you move forward to undertake new initiatives, and in the words of your minister, have the courage to be “bold in [your] vision and faith”.

Appendix 1: Responses to World Café Questions on Identity, Mission and Vision

The following are the words and phrases that the groups used to describe Mount Forest's identity and its gifts. The number in brackets after some of the terms represents the number of table groups that used the same term or phrase.

Table Group Responses to Round 1: Identity

A hub:

- Cathedral of the north - regional centre
- Regional hub for faith education and spiritual learning - WOW - Western Ontario Waterways (Region 8) - this will spin off within MFUC

Congregation:

- Followers of Christ; believe God is present and necessary in all lives; family that follows Christ - values, beliefs, fellowship (2)
- To be like Christ is...
- Family / like each other and get along (2)
- We are a community of faith - a community within a community - making the larger community effective (3)
- Striving to be a spirit-filled congregation
- Well-established church (1844) and membership
- Active
- Compassion, concern for each other (perhaps reflective of a small town); empathic, caring, welcoming group of individuals who love each other (4)
- Nurturing, supportive; family of caring people - when need arises, church and community come together (5)
- Dynamic - responsive, open, inclusive, non-threatening, accepting, friendly (4)
- Leadership in church and community; strong, excited, passionate leaders (volunteers - media including radio - web, FB, TV) (5)
- Creativity
- Enthusiasm
- Willingness to change (openness); willingness to try new things; less formal although traditional elements, "open to change to a certain degree" we welcome everyone here and are accepting of all ideas (new) (we struggle to change from what we do) (4) [*In the follow-up 4 Box Concrete Steps exercise many people noted that there is strong resistance to change and a reluctance to do things differently which varies with this suggestion that the congregation is willing to change. There appears to be a dichotomy in that some members strongly resist change while others are open to embracing change.]

- Talented - an abundance of talent that is shared - ministry leadership, choir director, choir, praise band (2)
- Diverse, great mixture of wide community members (4)
- Come as you are
- Welcoming, friendly, community-minded; we are 'bubbleless' - no walls, welcoming, accepting (5) but... passing of peace disrupting of service; some people who pass the peace to others do not acknowledge each other outside of church walls; passively welcoming
- There is a *passion* - when that passion is shared, people join in and enjoy the offerings
- We have fun and are humorous (2)
- We are informal
- We are trying to evolve - Raw Carrot, theatre, Praise Jam nights, Refugee family (2)
- Quiet, constant, steady
- Well-known entity in our community
- Strong committees
- "We would say no" Council would say "yes" (?)
- Conservative and liberal - faith (?)
- Relevance
- Support from congregation to fill in needs
- Need for a welcoming presence at funerals/funeral greeter
- Demographically challenged - who will carry torch in 1 year, 5 years, ten years?
- Place to share your pathway; the journey is yours, which can determine where we go
- Involved broadly within community

Building:

- Up-to-date
- Facilities and space are a gift
- Space, acoustics, location
- Spiritual place as well as a community place
- But... empty building can be unwelcoming without people
- Physical space to believe and to belong
- Physical size is a well-recognized land mark

Minister / Lay leaders

- Rev. Sheryl - very well appreciated by all and a strong leader
- Minister who feeds the soul

Outreach:

- Outreach is a strength; "willingness plus" (2)
- Number and variety of programs/activities

- Movie nights/community dinners (3)
- Space for outreach and to share with community
- Connecting to wider community Monday to Saturday
- Hope - only church to respond
- History of social activism (2) - HOPE, refugee program, Raw Carrot, community dinners, indigenous issues, benevolent TV
- Pickleball
- Scouts/Brownies
- Shared spaces
- Many activities (both in-reach and outreach) - you can be as engaged as you want

Service:

- Strong, gifted music leadership and strong choir support (5)
- Musical; lots of energy
- Variety
- “hesitant to clap”

Resources:

- Economic resources; break even (2)
- Financially generous contributors

Church groups and connections:

- Strong leadership in UCW re food - funerals, luncheons

Questions:

- How can we change? - others need a voice
- Be comfortable with being uncomfortable
- What can we do??

Table Group Responses to Round 2: Mission

The following list indicates some of the places where gifts of community and longings are noted.

What is God up to in the Community?

- Lots of wonderful things/organizations not necessarily through churches
- Beauty in nature around us
- The willingness of people and group to collaborate (Community round table)

- Greater awareness in all charitable groups regarding poverty, assistance for seniors, cancer patients, etc.
- The volunteerism within the community demonstrates love for one another (e.g. the speed of funds raised for our refugee family)
- Energizing people to do meaningful service
- Food bank (need to think about other times of year)
- Sunday dinners
- Community coming together in times of need
- VBS and messy church
- Bringing people together - creating unity
- Because of diversity - we have to learn acceptance - life-long learner
- Not clear what He is up to; He is operating through all of us - whether in church or not; our role - show the benefits of being Christians. We are here because He wants us to be. He plants challenges to work together. People are brought here for different reasons. We present ourselves the way we want to be seen as a Christian.

Where do you see life and energy?

- Nature - trails
- Projects - WWWishes, Christmas bureau, splash pad, skills day
- Good news “true evangelical faith cannot lie dormant”
- Community dinners, men’s breakfast
- Activity and energy within the senior community
- Energy exists within the youth but they need direction and help to channel - theatre, music
- Sports complex
- Our congregation members are involved in other service-minded organizations, mission and outreach work
- We represent Christ in every committee, community group we participate in
- Sports
- Church - how do we draw them in? What do we have to offer? What is our drawing card?
- Youth - new ideas, energy
- We want to help with directing them - they are our community’s future
- Are we trying to do God’s job
- What are we doing to be available and let his “plan” happen - we can represent Him the way He taught us to do

Social assets/services:

Social clubs - youth, seniors	Toastmasters	HOPE/Recovery
Service clubs	Raw Carrot	Girl Guides/Scouts
Community pantry	Pickle Ball	MOPS

Youth groups	Hospital foundation - Thrift shop	ICPS
Sports Complex	Seniors Activity - less for younger adults	MFUC
Coffee 'clubs'	Legion/Lions	Holstein/Optimists
Schools	Radio station	Big Brothers/Big Sisters
Cadets	Sports - hockey, soccer, baseball, etc.	Arena - walking track
Men's breakfast	AA meetings	Movie night
Bowling alley	Churches - community suppers and luncheons	Food bank
Fireworks festival	VON	Meals on Wheels
Refugee committee	Healthcare workers	Teachers
Cancer patient services		

*"Can do attitude" in the community

Commitment of people, resources (time and money)

Various groups willing to come together for conversation

Needs/Longings:

- Still too small town, conservative
- Too few refugees, linking to a larger world;
- "Too much harvest, not enough labourers";
- Organizations within communities do not always connect with each other
- Smaller groups - disadvantage is not enough to run programs sometimes; intergenerational is possible
- To be accepted - socially accepted with like-minded individuals
- Learning to walk a journey as a believer (studies) and from each other

Mental health:

- Lack of hope in the community
- Loneliness/social isolation
- Addictions
- How do we present mental health support?

Housing:

- **Lack of affordable housing**
- Homelessness
- seniors housing and social isolation

Gathering places:

- Gathering spots in community (Tim Horton's and Under 6 soccer (120 kids))
- No gathering places for younger people
- Opportunities for adults to gather and socialize
- Adult social clubs
- Seniors' cards

Financial resources:

- Poverty
- Lacking financial resources
- Lots of jobs, not enough employees

Volunteers:

- Volunteers with organizations in community - aging
- "Aging out" of helpers

Youth:

- Adolescents and teenagers - activities
- Apathy in youth
- Find a way to engage youth - safe and accepting environment, can we be a lighthouse for them?
How?
- Praising through song - music to reach people - youth

Parents:

- Night out - no kids - Friday or Saturday night day care

We need to ask questions

- How can we help?
- How do we connect with the people with needs?
- How do we provide for the homeless?
- What can our role be?

Table Group Responses to Round 3: Vision

Spiritual development:

- Cultivate continuation of church by creating opportunities for people to explore a faith journey
- Actively invite community in to church to participate in ongoing projects: community dinners, messy church
- Keep our own spiritual cup filled
- Participate in Bible study
- Have enough faith in our own beliefs

Giving thanks

- Appreciate what we have here
- Continue with what we are doing, but be mindful of not getting burnt out
- “God is not keeping a report card” - be thankful for what we have

Connecting with the community:

- As church we show leadership in areas of social justice and community nurturing
- Build and maintain strengths
- Continue community conversations
- Continue outreach to the community
- Desire for more flexibility and empowerment in our church and community journey
- Recognize that we need to serve, not just those in our congregation, but wider community
- Be social justice advocates/disciples within our community
- Use our creativity to move forward
- Determine greater need of the community:
 - The needs of people - what needs need to be addressed?
 - Look at longings to determine the ‘project’ and develop a plan - most effective with a goal
 - Figure out needs, then work the plan
- Make ourselves known
 - Use social media to ‘educate’ the community about who MFUC is - break barriers about church - we are love, peace, care\
 - We may not have a brand as a faith community/church

Specific project ideas:

- Games day/night
- Open church - money for daycare; babysitting - police check, training e.g. first aid - speaks to a demographic we are trying to connect with
- Sponsorship/partnership of a ‘welcome wagon’ or service group - increase scouts/guiding

Emerging Callings:

4 Box Concrete Steps top group ideas:

Children and youth:

- Build on Messy Church
- Kids' Night Out
- Have monthly childcare with Biblical education - e.g. Messy church at night
- Bridal and baby showers
- Parent night
- Find a place for kids/youth
- Youth theatre

Collaborate (amalgamate?) with area churches

- One strong main stream Protestant Church for Mount Forest and surrounding area

In-reach, spiritual growth:

- Support the minister to be certain she is fed as well
- Learn more about scripture - historical and geographical context
- Christ wants us out of the closet - Bible focused learning and study

Outreach:

- Re-visit refugee committee
- Maintain and support our existing programs
- Host a coffee house/games days for adults

Renovation:

- Shelter - Church house or fellowship hall
- Modernize building - day care, amphitheatre

Governance:

- Examine Board and committees for efficiencies and effectiveness

Appendix 2: 4 Box - Concrete Steps Exercise Responses

<p>Box 1: What is God calling us to be and to do? Specifically what have you heard and feel that you want to see happening at your church five years from now?</p>	<p>Box 3: What are some of the obstacles or stumbling blocks that might hinder us from shifting into a new place/vision? What might we do to overcome these obstacles?</p>
<p>Box 2: What resources and leadership are required to live into the vision that is starting to take place? Specifically where do you want to focus our energy, gifts and treasures in our ministry?</p>	<p>Box 4: What are tangible/specific next steps or actions that can take place –</p> <p>Immediately:</p> <p>Within next six months:</p> <p>Over the next year:</p>

Appendix 2: 4 Box - Concrete Steps Exercise Responses

1. Box 1: One strong mainstream Protestant church within the community of Mount Forest versus one aging church (MRUC) and five declining (Woodland, Letterbaum? United churches) (Knox (Conn), Holstein?, Mt. Forest Presbyterian)
Box 2: Conversation with others in a non-threatening way; less [focus] on the building, more on a vibrant faith community; also, less focus on denomination and name
Box 3: Conservatism; holding onto past, building, traditions; Consolidating with other churches may allow for 2 services on a Sunday - early/ later; modern/traditional
Box 4: Immediately: Speak with or gather leadership of other churches to determine interest in shared initiative - e.g. shared services or special event
Six months:
Over the next year:
2. Box 1: Some young adults being called to serve in whatever capacity; skills day community suppers maintained or expanded; streamlined committee work; social project - at least one
Box 2: Identify most need area in community; try to free up any duplication of time commitment; church space identification
Box 3: Age demographic, younger leaders
Box 4: Immediately: skills day April 6; maybe offering a second year with donation box
Next six months: constitution change proposal to council
Over the next year: facilitate community round table
3. Box 1: Outreach to the wider community; leadership
Box 2: Teamwork
Box 3: Fear of something new; good communication
Box 4: Immediately: Meet with outside groups again; radio campaign inviting new people to come out
Six months: make sure new people are greeted and made to feel at home
Over the next year: move forward
4. Box 1: Discipleship pathway and resources from baptism to death; space created in sanctuary that allows for flexibility - performances, flexible seating, accessible; café style worship, worship in the round; known for creating a sense of belonging and spiritual presence; be part of a community initiative that addresses poverty, social isolation, food insecurity; continued hosting of community round table
Box 2: re-designing, renovating the sanctuary; ministry configuration that allows for more teaching, spiritual care; re-energizing the congregation in the depth of their faith journey
Box 3: Fear of spending; having to raise money; fear of change; overcoming: Being bold in our vision and faith
Box 4: Immediately: start working on articulating strategic plan; vision; start revising worship; education so that more input/accountability is required
Six months: Start implementing strategic plan; initiate community round tables
Over the next year:
5. Box 1: More connection within community; more involvement with youth, millennials; maintain programs we have
Box 2: first maintenance of programs; define new programs
Box 3: how do we connect more if we do not have cell phone numbers etc.? Gathering place

- Box 4: Immediately: Skills day; incorporate emails, teleconferencing to get millennials involved with specific event
Six months: interact with millennials
Over the next year: reduce council's number and encourage under 40's on committees or specific events
6. Box 1: Find and fill a need; more youth in our church; secular outreach; youth or senior activity
Box 2: Must be able to listen to our youth and seniors and still maintain our spirituality for our congregation
Box 3: Conservative viewpoints; lack of finances; lack of volunteers; we could partner with other groups and denominations
Box 4: Immediately: meetings with like-minded groups. Define greatest need and listen to them.
Six months: Target individuals and group with greatest needs.
Over the next year: Build on successes.
7. Box 1: Have program developed to support young adults by offering child care one night a month so the adults can have a night out free of children.
Box 2: Need to have a meeting with young adults; need to develop a list of people who will do child care; child care needs to have Bible story time.
Box 3: Getting people to do child care.
Box 4: Immediately: Meet with young adults
Six months: Start child care program
Over the next year: Check to see if childcare is effective.
8. Box 1: Another refugee committee; be part of an affordable housing project; be part of a local meeting house for youth
Box 2: Re-work the sanctuary to be more community friendly
Box 3: Apathy, fear of failure
Box 4: Immediately: organize committee to take on projects
Six months: be a leader in W.O.W.
Over the next year:
9. Box 1: More young families; more use of church for community events
Box 2:
Box 3: Too many other activities stopping young families from coming to church; financial constraints
Box 4: Immediately:
Six months:
Over the next year:
10. Box 1: Outreach to the greater community; involve youth; young adults; needs in community and church that need addressed; church is more than the building; review the space and programs we have now and see if they are being utilized to their full potential and are the programs meeting the needs now and into the future?
Box 2: Strong leader(s), volunteers; deep look into what we have to offer and if the programs and space can be used differently
Box 3: Fear of change, traditions, resources; okay to "think outside of the box"; be open to other's ideas
Box 4: Immediately: Find the need or project(s)
Six months: Set plan (action)

- Over the next year: Plan in motion and working towards fruition
11. Box 1: Develop spiritual souls; connected with others; more musical entertainment
 Box 2: Strong (solid) leadership
 Box 3: Commitment, governance
 Box 4: Immediately: Talk with others to find players; determine a new governance model
 Six months:
 Over the next year: Have new governance in place
 12. Box 1: Young parents will have child-sitting opportunities here; activities for the youth of a nature that will encourage them to join; many of our "town" churches combine to encourage young people to be involved in these activities
 Box 2: Focus on energetic leader(s) to lead community /church-based activities
 Box 3: Ways that we can make workable contacts with those outside of the church are difficult to make work; continually making new contacts
 Box 4: Immediately: Set goals that are reachable
 Six months: Review of those goals
 Over the next year: Committees organized to begin this work
 13. Box 1: To remain a place of worship, welcoming to all; I am a person who believes in "God" as my conscience. Perhaps I could find a reference to any problems in the Bible but I do know right from wrong.
 Box 2: One church for those churches that are failing - because of lack of people attending.
 Box 3: Getting people seeing the need; remove "titles" from the groups and teach love and community.
 Box 4: Immediately: Go back to no sports until after 1 on Sunday; provide activities in church for children (choir, Bible study, games, hand work, etc.)
 Six months: Who knows?!
 Over the next year:
 14. Box 1: Community involvement; providing spiritual growth under strong leadership; daycare centre, sanctuary change, trivia and question of the week
 Box 2: Need to promote ourselves to a more youthful group; need multiple volunteers to help revitalize our ongoing programs
 Box 3: No willingness to think outside of the current box; accept and embrace change; be willing to volunteer our time, talents and leadership; as our congregation ages, we lose these very valuable resources and we need to replenish in order to be viable
 Box 4: Immediately: Use media to promote events - i.e. radio, T.V., web page, social media and our openness to receive; continue to provide outreach programs
 Six months: Plan for "Kids Night Out" or an outreach of our congregation to help expose and attract young families
 Over the next year: Maintain and expand our volunteer base and tap into the strengths that they bring to help avoid burn-out
 15. Box 1: To present ourselves to the community, clearly, unambiguously as a follow of Christ; 1. Daycare; community centre offering hope, expression, active youth focused, musicals, concerts; 3. Assembly setup for amphitheatre effect, supported by corporatization (?); 4. The Bible education or review - standard for all
 Box 2: Knowledgeable Christians; more social activism; supporting things like i. equal rights ii. Injustice iii. Bring the news home iv. Re-visit refugee committee v. Bridal/baby showers

Box 3: Refusing to change - things are fine; identify timelines

Box 4: Immediately:

Six months:

Over the next year:

16. Box 1: I see our church as a focal point in our community, where people of all ages come every day of the week! One viable and vibrant protestant church in our community
Box 2: Youth, young families; daycare, amphitheatre, Bible..., seven days/week
Box 3: Disagreement, nay saying, lack of commitment; financial resources
Box 4: Immediately: Agree on a plan
Six months: Advertise our plan
Over the next year: Get the pan ready
17. Box 1: Being present; engaging with youth (youth group, parent gatherings); more community outreach - open doors, shelter; be that "hub"; more community round tables; Bridal and baby showers; welcome wagon
Box 2: Time and money; Christian education; supporting young families; helping community kids to play sports/swimming lessons, dance; church resources
Box 3: People aren't always open to change; volunteers, people have mindset of not my job or I've done my time; encourage and educate - things take time; they don't happen over night
Box 4: Immediately: Getting families together for dinner (who's coming for dinner); parent night
Six months: Paying for sports or equipment for families in need
Over the next year: Put on another play; do something with the church house! "Hub" - update it or sell it! (plenty of space upstairs); Redo Sunday school space; make it more appealing (not so "class room")*problem - the stairs!
18. Box 1: Ambassadors for the United Church and in general the followers of Jesus; In 5 years: Continued United Church presence in the community - both in church and outreach; update sanctuary; meet and greet with members who don't usually attend to try to engage them.
Box 2: Continued volunteers; continued programming within the church
Box 3: Finances
Box 4: Immediately: Coffee and donuts with those members who don't usually attend (to engage more)
Six months: Host another community round table - gather idea for even one project to help the larger community.
Over the next year: Form a community committee to complete the project (would take ++ volunteers from each group) e.g. like Welcome Wagon
19. Box 1: Maintain; grow slow and steady; structural upgrade (updated)
Box 2: Concentrated and do well in whatever field you are given - support to others
Box 3: Some people do not like change of anything; very routine in nature; done the same way every time - "not broken, don't fix it" attitude; money
Box 4: Immediately:
Six months: Maintain present projects and do well
Over the next year: See new program/projects start - new ideas, interest
20. Box 1: We have many resources and need to learn where and how to use them.
Box 2: Need to figure out who needs us and how we can help
Box 3: Not knowing how to involve people on the outside. Do we give them what they are hungering for if they do come?

Box 4: Immediately: Flyers to community; TV and radio insofar as is permissible

Six months:

Over the next year:

21. Box 1: Maintaining the wonderful things that are already happening here. I think God wants me to continue to lead and follow worship; updated sanctuary; youth; kids' drop-in center; coffee house; games night; babysitting; women's conference
Box 2: Volunteer base caring support of each other. Rev. Sheryl's guidance; dinners, film nights, meaningful worship services; lots of groups in structures; money; wifi
Box 3: Volunteer energy; alternate \$; announce project(s) and money will come; money - child and youth minister again?
Box 4: Immediately: Get group together to decide next steps
Six months: Begin process of renovation
Over the next year: Complete process
22. Box 1: Be a supporting role to other groups in the community; we can do more, but respect that others are at capacity, and that's okay; to be able to offer a variety of services - take away limitations of pews, drop-down screen that doesn't block choir
Box 2: Continue to support our congregation in whatever we do, but also make sure we are being fed spiritually; want to focus on educating our own members (i.e. setting the historical and geographical context of scripture); encourage others to share in worship services; commitment of time; treasures - prayer shawl ministry, continued support of school in Kenya
Box 3: People are afraid of change and set in their ways; still offer traditional services at various times; obstacles can be overcome through prayer, dialogue and a willingness to try new things and recognition that it's okay to try something else if the first doesn't succeed
Box 4: Immediately: Plan for next round table - now that we have heard the issues, we need to ask - what do you need? how do we continue to stay connected? find out what we can do together?
Six months: Continue plans for sanctuary re-visioning; finalize and get agreement with congregation
Over the next year: Start sanctuary project; get rid of pews; part of the balcony to open up the altar area
23. Box 1: Walk the talk; conserve and support our volunteers; Games day; Like the idea of a specific babysitting time for parents; maybe some type of a coffee house - for seniors, youth, for combination
Box 2: Help but do not want a lone or total leadership role on new projects; continue to support programs for those less fortunate financially
Box 3: Time - for volunteers and for participants; planning - escape from constant electronic devices but realize need to incorporate if we want our youth; my own resistance to radical change from tradition; the United Church support in keeping the proclaimed atheist as an active UC minister!!!
Box 4: Immediately: Communicate with social groups as to what is their need - how can we help?; continue with our outreach programs
Six months: Conserve energies of volunteers so that they can continue
Over the next year: Don't get rid of all traditions!!!
24. Box 1: Babysitting service; Although service is so important, I feel we need to also focus on studying the Bible to better prepare ourselves for service and increase our faith. Maintain our

music ministry, which includes choir, praise band, worship evenings. Maintain Sunday dinners (community dinners).

Box 2: the cost for the babysitting service would be for food, CPR training. Volunteers may wish to pay for their own training and/or donate food. The cost of the Bible study material would be minimal; a leader to research. We need to have resources for new music/instruments as well as properly compensate our organist/choir director.

Box 3: Re: babysitting: Legalities, such as insurance, police checks, CPR training. We can work through these challenges by researching and creating policy. Re Bible study: the challenge would be to find space, material and most importantly a leader.

Box 4: Immediately: Research rules and laws

Six months: Schedule training

Over the next year: Schedule volunteers

25. Box 1: Young families and youth - programs for these groups e.g. messy church; support for seniors (over 75)

Box 2: Programs - continue many that are in place but also upgrading to keep up with needs and interests

Box 3: Leadership and "staffing"

Box 4: Immediately: Enhancing programs already in place to maintain interests or create new interest

Six months:

Over the next year:

26. Box 1: Monthly community dinner with support through handing out invitations to neighbourhoods; organized activity at outside location for youth.

Box 2: Promote each individual's faith journey and spiritual growth - this can be achieved through leadership and minimal resources.

Box 3: Change is not always readily accepted. Change can represent a financial deficiency.

However, if the change is worthy and clearly documented, projects can be eagerly supported, i.e. our refugee project which was a tremendous success and very rewarding experience.

Box 4: Immediately: Map out various neighbourhoods and issue invitations for community dinner.

Six months: Expand messy church

Over the next year:

27. Box 1: The love and support that the church gives now to continue; to start an outreach to houses starting close to the church to join and be included in our loving congregation

Box 2: Required - strong leadership (prayerful), encouragement, prayer/guidance, understanding, faith, sharing. Focus: Youth, family support

Box 3: Blocks - overload (work), financial, building restrictions; Solution: Prayer, requests and support, planning/strategies

Box 4: Immediately: Prayer, wait on the word, regroup and rejuvenate, keep informed

Six months: infrastructure of willing helpers. Prayer, Break down barriers - be open about God's rewards

Over the next year: Put plans into motion - reach out to the community - share our vision for MFUC families.

28. Box 1: Continued outreach - community suppers, tv & radio ministry etc., community gathering place; continue to be a vibrant voice in our community; facilitate community communication

Box 2: Resources - renewed energy (our council is tired - some have been on too long); focus on reaching out/not luring people in

Box 3: Differing opinions - wide range of vision - some have no vision and resist change; so - communicate better

Box 4: Immediately: Assess what is working and focus our energy on these / drop things that are discouraging people

Six months: Revitalize; bring people together. Decide if we need to renovate.

Over the next year:

29. Box 1: I would like to think our church family is still viable. Conduit between God and the community outside church - refugee family, young people's theatre
- Box 2: Continue to support the Raw Carrot; engaging youth in activities that are outside of the "church"; connecting with other churches in the area to share resources
- Box 3: Financials get in the way; fear of change gets in the way; how to overcome? Continue to foster existing outreach in new ways - community dinners, messy church - invitations to new parts of the community
- Box 4: Immediately: Support messy church
- Six months: Kids' Night Out; Youth theatre initiative
- Over the next year: Radio ad campaign; social media connectivity
30. Box 1: To be the link between God and community; to have developed a rapport with groups who currently are NOT comfortable here; to be less ritualistic in things that don't matter - e.g. all the sitting/standing/sitting in church, choir gowns, etc. less formality while maintaining reverence; more community outreach; youth - theatre? we have SPACE - shelter?
- Box 2: Social justice focus - outside of the box/church; relying on SOCIAL MEDIA to communicate!
- Box 3: Blocks: "we have always done it this way" attitude; Shift (changing the status quo) - proof by example - e.g. bringing youth theatre into the sanctuary!! :-) plus bringing R-rated movies into Fellowship Hall = removing the "holier than thou" image; more people involved here than before!
- Box 4: Immediately: Support/promote messy church more
- Six months: Kids' night out, youth theatre
- Over the next year: another refugee family, or similar project
31. Box 1: Faithful disciples; carry our faith into the community; in five years - church space being used 7 days a week; small group discussions and committees
- Box 2: Financial resources need to continue; new leaders as we "age out"; pastoral care - meeting needs of all ages in congregation and reaching out to community ; social justice
- Box 3: volunteer burn-out; leadership burn-out; volunteer apathy; I think we need more education sessions - e.g. Sunday school training, Messy church training; pastoral visiting - this can be done by people within our congregation or sometimes more highly trained person
- Box 4: Immediately: Sharing today's information with the congregation - presentation at AGM) - Volunteer sign-up for committee positions or helping positions
- Six months: Volunteer recognition event with possibly a speaker with some educational input
- Over the next year: Strong committees and leaders who share the vision to go forward