

## Visioning Team report: May 2008

The WSUMC Visioning Retreat was held on November 10, 2007. A Visioning Team was formed after this energizing event, and began meeting in January 2008. For the past several months the team has been studying a process of spiritual discernment.

Discerning God's Will Together (Morris & Olsen), is our chosen guide for learning and using a process of spiritual discernment. The goal is to have a framework in place that facilitates learning God's will for WSUMC, and discovering what God yearns for us. The Visioning Team has spent five months studying and discussing the book, being mindful (and a bit awed) of the importance of the responsibility and complexity of our visioning tasks. Here are some of the principles of our discernment study that we attempt to implement and practice:

- Framing: identifying focus
- Grounding: identifying guiding principles and values
  - Scripture
  - United Methodist tradition
  - Commitments to education, service, diversity, hospitality, and worship
  - Awareness of how we came to be (WSUMC history)
  - Awareness of who we are now
    - Trends: membership, worship attendance, volunteer willingness, finance
    - Programs and participation
    - Are we declining or are we growing?
    - Adequacy of infrastructure: building, staff resources
  - Realizing importance of learning who we are to be
    - Value of setting goals
  - Measuring effectiveness and progress of current and future endeavors
  - Recognizing our current future-oriented practices (for example, committees plan for three years ahead as they submit future budgets; WSUMC staff plans for programs)
- Shedding: setting aside personal preferences and agenda; suspending assumptions
  - Becoming indifferent to our own will in order to learn God's will
- Rooting: connecting religious and biblical themes/images to our current circumstances
- Listening: learning ways to hear Holy Spirit; listening to silence; hearing the discerning community; hearing the voices of those interested, involved, or affected; hearing voices, opinions, and perspectives in caring, respectful manners, without being judgmental
- Exploring: playful imagining, imaging, and brainstorming; considering options and paths
- Improving: praying; consulting with each other; working to improve options
- Weighing: sorting and testing options in response to Spirit; pros and cons; fruits of endeavor
- Closing: concluding exploration; moving to selecting options in response to Spirit and discernment process; testing consensus
- Resting: rest is a test; feelings of consolation (peace) reflect movement toward God's will; feelings of desolation (distress) reflect movement away from God's will

This discernment model frames the method of our visioning activity. On May 22, 2008 we begin studying Visioning Retreat results. Please keep us in your prayers!