

Internal Communications Assessment Report to Administrative Council January 26, 2010

Don Wheat, Rev. Cyndy Garn and Rev. David Hoffman have copies of the full report.

Goals:

- ✓ Increased communication throughout the Church.
- ✓ Determining if perception was the reality.
- ✓ Identifying or mapping the current communication flow.
- ✓ Understanding expectations from all perspectives (internal and external).
- ✓ Determining our level of effectiveness and identifying ways we can improve.
- ✓ Identifying ways to pull information from the membership.

Early in 2009 Administrative Council authorized the creation of a Task Force to evaluate the Church's communications tools and report back with the results. The Task Force conducted a qualitative evaluation between March 16 through May 28, 2009, and used this data in the development of a church-wide quantitative survey, which was conducted between September 20 – October 30, 2009. A summary of the results follow. The full report is available in the office for anyone wishing to read it.

Worthington United Methodist Church has 1,378 members. Of those members 146 began the survey with 132 completing the survey in its entirety. Of the original 146 survey respondents, 135 responded to the question pertaining the age grouping they belonged - **A 10% participation rate**. The following chart illustrates a comparison breakdown of the age of respondents corresponding to the age breakdown of the congregation:

Age Groupings	Membership	Respondents
Under Age 18	85 (6.2%)	0 (0%)
18 yrs to 25 yrs	185 (13.4%)	3 (2%)
26 yrs to 35 yrs	195 (14.2%)	9 (7%)
35 yrs to 50 yrs	288 (20.9%)	34 (25%)
Over 50 years	625 (45.3%)	89 (66%)

Those under the age of 18 are unrepresented and the 18 to 35 age groups under-represented in Stage Two of this Assessment.

Recommendations

- ✓ The Messenger
 - Tap into the graphics artists in our congregation to assist in the re-tooling of this resource since it has been many years since the newsletter has had a facelift.
- ✓ E-Blasts
 - Adding the Prayer Concerns mentioned in Worship. (Completed)
 - Improvements to type and how the document is scanned or entered might help our older audience read the document online or improve its print quality.
- ✓ E-mails Regarding Meetings, Events, etc.
 - E-mail agendas and minutes from the previous meeting along with meeting notifications so that participants can come to meetings better prepared.
 - The process of preparing, approving and storing meeting minutes should be incorporated into the leadership training process in order to insure continuity of committee work and an accurate history of the work of the church.
 - With regard to church-wide announcements, the office needs to be aware that many families are on multiple e-mail lists within the church. When broadcasting church-wide news, the Task Force recommends that the individual with the complete list send e-mail so that families are not receiving the same message multiple times.
 - Another option that might help in avoiding SPAM filters would be for the list to be divided between interest groups and each person responsible for that group send the e-mail. However, this will not

solve the problem of duplication of the same message if families happen to be on multiple lists (e.g. Families who have both elementary and secondary age children).

✓ Telephone

Telephone usage as a major communications tool has changed dramatically over the past five years. 38% of the respondents to the survey indicated that they couldn't evaluate this tool because it didn't apply to them. Additionally, 18% rated this category as either not meeting their needs at all or did, but needed improvement. As a result, the Task Force determined that the manner in which our church utilizes the telephone as a communications tool is ineffective, particularly for outgoing messages. Therefore, the Task Force recommends the following:

- In dealings with the congregation, members need to be asked what their preferred method of communication is. The simple question – “How can we best reach you?” accomplishes two things.
 - It implies that we want the individual engaged in the life of the church, and
 - It lets the individual know that we want to respect their time and space.
- Consider the viability of text broadcasting capabilities, particularly with regard to our younger members. A word of caution first – this is a tool to be used with discretion. It is recommended that the office follow Rev. Heather Moyer's example and ask individuals if it is okay to send texts.
- With regard to incoming calls after hours, improvements to the voicemail process are needed.
 - The current message is too long for those just needing to leave a message. The Task Force suggests providing callers with an opt-out selection immediately following the greeting so they don't have to wait through the entire message just to leave a message.

✓ Face-to-Face

The Task Force finds it somewhat alarming that 27% of the respondents to this survey have not had a face-to-face conversation with leaders in our congregation. Additionally, another 14% are unsatisfied with the face-to-face conversations that they have had. The Task Force recommends:

- Posting the Committees (with a description of what they do), the Chair (with their preferred method of contact), and a list of the current committee members on the Web site. A list should also be included in the newsletter and in the Bulletin following the commissioning of the Lay Leadership when the new terms begin in January.
- Additionally, those staff persons with key responsibility for communications (i.e. newsletter, bulletins, Web site, etc.) are included on the agenda for the leadership-training workshop. This would allow them to discuss requirements in the form of layout and deadlines eliminating confusion and missed opportunities.

✓ Website

- The Task Force is recommending that the Web site be reorganized taking into consideration the needs and desires of the respondents. Some of the most compelling suggestions include:
 - **Immediate** posting of weather-related cancellations or changes
 - Posting audio files of the sermons
 - Posting the sermon topics before Sunday
 - Providing access to a **secured** online Church Directory
 - Providing space for minutes from Administrative Council, Financial updates, organizational structure (how decisions are made)
 - Information about CPC (this is already in process)
 - FAQs about weddings, custodial help, church use policies, committees, office hours, key contact information, etc.
 - Additionally, members want a site that is easy to read and navigate.

✓ Annual Report to the Congregation

- This is not a current tool utilized at WUMC, however the survey results indicated that this is something that the congregants were interested in having access too. While few wished to physically receive such a report in the mail, having this document available in the office or library and having it published on the Web site was important.
- The Task Force is recommending that, as we are ready to begin a new year in the cycle of church work, Committee chairs be instructed that year-end reports will be expected for activities undertaken during the current year. The Task Force recommends that Administrative Council establish the report format and content requirements as well as the deadline for reporting. Administrative Council should take into consideration the following suggestions from survey respondents regarding what they would like to see in an Annual Report:

- Accurate membership numbers
 - Outreach information to include the number of people involved and the hours they donated
 - Dollars donated to missions,
 - An up-to-date financial picture to include:
 - Operating income/expenditures
 - Designated giving for special projects
 - Second-Mile Giving
 - Update on Strategic Planning Goals
 - Committee Updates – goals and accomplishments
 - While it will be difficult to make such a request retroactively, a simplified report for 2009 would be beneficial and is recommended.
- ✓ Facebook
- Thirty respondents provided ways they felt the church would benefit by adding Facebook to the connectional ministry. One comment in particular strikes a chord as the pertinence of adding social networking to the Church’s communications toolbox – “WUMC is people, not a building. Anything which helps people communicate is helpful.” There currently is a Friends of WUMC page but the Church has not sanctioned this. The Task Force has recommended that the Staff review the comments provided and further explore how social networking can best be utilized as a constructive and viable part of the ministry of WUMC.
- ✓ Other Comments and Recommendations
- Adult Council or another appropriate work group within the Church look into ways of continuing the WUMC connection with our members away at college or serving in the military. Part of this work would include:
 - Finding the most appropriate way(s) of letting the congregation know where folks are and what they’re doing (e.g. So and so is in the [branch of the military] serving in [location], or by college listing our students who attend there).
 - As our young population was significantly under-represented in this assessment, the Task Force wonders if we have someone in the 25 year-old age bracket in a leadership role that can help us capture our moving targets. Specifically, those who have grown up in the church but, whether for college or temporary moves are only here periodically, or **most importantly**, can draw in our young adults who are in the area but not staying connected? The Task Force recommends follow-up in this area to look into how we can better serve our young adult population. This work should not only include singles, but also our young couples and families that fall in the under 30-age group.
 - Public access to office and worship hours and contact information needs to be improved. The current signage along High Street is easily overlooked and once a person is at our doors, we don’t provide any helpful information if they find the doors locked.
 - Once the Worship Hour study group has finished their work, if a change to worship hours result, the Task Force recommends using a large banner or sandwich board signage on the front lawn to announce the change.
 - Additionally, near the church office, information should be posted on who to contact in an emergency should a staff member not be present. Likewise, the same answers to FAQs we post on the Web site should also be readily available at the information desk on a daily basis.

Respectfully Submitted:

The Communications Task Force

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