Creating a Future

Discerning God’s Vision for the Wisconsin Annual Conference
Current Reality Check

- Morale – Low
- Trust – Low
- Anxiety – High
- Communication – Poor, but Improving
- Financial Concerns – Extremely High
- Resistance to Change – High
- Feeling of Connectedness – Low
- General Sense – Spiral of decline
First Steps

- Commitment to the local church
  - More resources and support delivered to circuits and local church
- Top priority
  - Collaborative leadership – developing strong clergy & laity partnered leadership at local church, circuit and conference levels
- Communication
  - Structures, technologies, skills
Next steps

Resources to develop and support

- Healthier relationships within and between congregations
- More productive, creative, spiritually grounded congregational environments
- Addressing short-term and long-term financial issues, grounded in a strong theology of Christian stewardship (2012 Conference-wide emphasis planned)
- “Back-to-basics” plans for spiritual formation, Christian education, worship, evangelism, missions, stewardship
Giant Steps

Breaking Inertia
- Setting MISSIONAL priorities
- Heal broken RELATIONSHIPS
- Empowerment through OWNERSHIP – more people doing more things in more places

Building Trust
- Focus on the POSITIVE
- Strengthen connection through ACCOUNTABILITY
- Foster healthy and spiritually respectful COMMUNICATION
Common Sense Planning

- Trends are fickle
- Demographics are deceiving
- Planning is more art than science
- Most people plan for the past, rather than the future
- Dreaming is not the same as visioning; guessing is not the same as planning.
Seven Key Factors: Wisconsin Annual Conference

- Age
- Music
- Multiculturalism
- Facilities
- Technology
- Money
- Specialization
2010 – 2035

- Age 17 and under will drop from 15% to 11% of Wisconsin pop.;
- Age 55 and older will increase from 13% to 19%;
- Young families (families with young children) have least amount of disposable income and discretionary time; 55+ have greatest amount of both;
- 29 and under are most attracted to newer churches and stay an average of 2 years; 55 and older are most attracted to established churches with relationship and service opportunities and stay an average of 8.5 years.
Music

Music has become perhaps the most important factor determining where people worship –

- 1-in-6 visitors to a church will not return if Organ music is the primary form;
- 3-in-5 visitors will not return to a church where music is poorly performed; the same number will not return if music is performed for them;
- New music must be taught – 90% of people want to sing songs they know;
- Churches offering a diversity of styles will increase; those featuring a single style will not; those attempting to “blend” styles will decrease
Multiculturalism

Monoculture is ending – acting is better than reacting
- Non-Mexican Latinos – between 30 to 50 different Hispanic cultures – will be the fastest growing non-Euro-Caucasian segment;
- Mexicans will be the second fastest segment
- Churches should be offering Spanish as a second language (SSL) to their congregations as well as English as a second language (ESL) to immigrant populations
- The prevailing context should be “ministry with,” rather than “ministry to” or “ministry for”;
- Stereotyping must be challenged
Facilities

Critical analysis and evaluation of our facilities (buildings and properties) must occur

- By 2035, 90% of our buildings will be over 50 years old; 80% of them supported by a congregation smaller than when they were built
- Building, insurance, and maintenance costs (including loans) account for 35% of church budgets - will rise to over 50% by 2035
- It is estimated that 70% of our buildings are larger than necessary; 85% of church space used less than 3 hours each week;
- Fastest growing and healthiest churches doing more and more ministry “off-site”
Technology

- Modern tech is important – people will not attend a church that doesn’t provide them with bare-minimum
  - Cutting edge tech costly; costs fall fast as tech changes
  - Sound and visuals become more important as churches age
  - Boomer/post-Boomer expectations higher for sound and picture quality – expertise in using tech
  - Websites will become essential – blogs, podcasts, video, social networking (Cyber-church becoming reality)
Money

- The largest pool of discretionary disposable assets will peak somewhere between 2021 and 2027
- Those non-profits who receive gifts will be those who ask for them
- Churches focusing on planned giving and building endowments today will benefit most
- Monies for missional initiatives will be easier to cultivate than monies for building and property
- Investment in the future will trump maintenance every time
- Good stewardship of church resources will become a top priority (but the trend will be toward more rather than less)
Specialization

- UM churches cannot go toe-to-toe with the mega-church (unless Adam Hamilton is your pastor)
  - The healthiest churches will excel at one or two distinctive ministries
  - Greater intra-denominational and ecumenical partnerships and support are the wave of the future
  - Pastoral partnerships are necessary – networks of specialists (Circuit Ministry?)
  - Witness and reputation should become planning priorities
Summary

In 2035, we will be:

- Older
- More diverse
- Wealthier
- In smaller facilities
- With cutting edge tech supporting high quality music & worship arts
- Collaborating in specialized ministries
  (or else we will be gone...)