

**Holy Covenant United Methodist Church
Strategic Map 2008-2011
Adopted unanimously by All-Church Conference, 6.22.08**

WHY A NEW VISION PROCESS?

Rationale: Holy Covenant United Methodist Church has always lived out of a dynamic vision, as people on a journey, committed to a fresh way of being church: open and affirming to all people, blending ancient and contemporary forms of worship and arts, and, through radical discipleship, working for a better, fairer world.

In the past several years, the grace of God and strong lay and pastoral leadership have positioned Holy Covenant to continue growing and serving faithfully in the midst of a transitioning neighborhood and a transitional population (many people call this neighborhood “home” for only a short time, while they finish school, start families, etc.). Through the hard work of incarnating our 2006-2008 Strategic Map, we have celebrated many ministry milestones in the past three years. These accomplishments include: A.) Adding a second service to our Sunday morning schedule and by Spring 2008, averaging **130 people in worship**—a 53% increase since 2006; B.) A major increase in membership, with over **40 new members since the beginning of 2006**; C.) The launch of a capital campaign that gathered over **\$300,000 in pledges** beyond annual giving and is now funding major building improvements such as a refurbished balcony, new roof, and new worship projection system; D.) The **expansion of ministry staff** to include a Minister of Children and Families and a thriving Parish Intern program; E.) **Reclaiming and fully funding Dignity Diner**, our weekly meal ministry with homeless and hungry people in our neighborhood; F) The launch of an exciting **small groups ministry**.

In Spring 2008, we realized that nearly every major goal of the 2006-2008 Strategic Map had been fulfilled, and the time was right to discern God’s call for our next season of mission and ministry.

Process: The new mission, core practices/values, strategic map, and leadership structure are the work of a four-month congregational process intentionally involving diverse individuals and ministry teams. Broad involvement included three Church Council meetings, two all-church conversations/opportunities for feedback, a leadership retreat, several lay leader and staff meetings, opportunities for individual feedback, conversations within particular ministry areas/committees, and ultimately a special all-church conference on Sunday, June 22, where the new mission, strategic map, and leadership structure were unanimously adopted.

WHAT’S A STRATEGIC MAP, AND HOW DOES IT CONNECT WITH OUR MISSION?

Purpose: When you’re planning a trip, a lot of information is needed. You have to know your starting point and your destination. You set a direction to travel and decide which roads you’re going to take. You chart some mile markers or pit stops that will give you a chance to rest and ensure that you’re heading the right way. You get your car (or bike) ready. And then you go. And you encounter detours and delays and washed-out roads, and so you make new choices to stay on course to your destination. Finally, with **careful planning**, a **generous amount of flexibility**, and a **belief that your journey is important**, you arrive at the destination.

We engaged the vision process with this metaphor in mind, understanding our **Mission** (our reason for being) as both the **destination and general direction** we need to travel, our **Strategic Map** as the **detailed road map** for reaching our destination/mission, and our **Core practices/values** (the ideas, principles, and living beliefs that we stand for) as fundamental mile markers on the journey.

Mission: *Seek God, Love All People, Change the World*

Our new mission—our reason for being—is clear, memorable, and dynamic. It points to intersection of the personal and social dimensions of Christian faith. Both a goal and a process, it states our basic congregational self-understanding and conveys a pathway for growing deeper in love and faith.

Core practices/values: Gather/Worship, Connect/Community, Listen/Learn, Serve/Change, Reach Out/Invite, Intentional Diversity, Leadership

The Strategic Map

A guide for reaching our mission, the Strategic Map provides a direction to follow, prepares our congregation for the future, suggests some roads to take, and identifies some mile markers along the way. While it does identify some particular actions, the ultimate following of this map lies with the leadership of this congregation—lay ministry teams, lay and clergy staff, and others invited to share the good work with us. We feel confident that the ministry areas and strategic objectives identified in this document are a faithful direction to follow in order to live into our mission.

Strategic Map 2008 – 2011

This strategic map identifies nine areas (three under each component of the mission) of focus/primary goals to continue strengthening the vibrant ministry of Holy Covenant Church. Each area includes several strategic objectives for the next 3 years.

SEEK GOD

1. Deepen and expand a contemporary-ancient worship life of joy, wonder, and challenge that awakens people to God's presence and invites people into the way of Jesus, which we believe is an amazing and compelling way to live.
2. Develop a core discipleship curriculum for seekers and members that (re)introduces basic Christian beliefs and practices; communicates Holy Covenant's vision, culture, and language; and invites individuals to discern how their lives are part of God's project for the world.
3. Root ourselves meaningfully and flexibly in the Christian faith and the Methodist/Wesleyan tradition by practicing a life of prayer; studying the Bible with committed and open minds; and engaging in theological conversations with contemporary and ancient sources and neighbors.

LOVE ALL PEOPLE

4. Celebrate life together by bringing people into smaller communities of belonging and friendship, in which through sharing life, spiritual practices, eating together, and having fun, they experience care, ministry, and love—and learn to see in each other the image of God.

5. Architect an invitation/evangelism plan that (1) seeks and reaches out to unchurched/dischurched people in this city using creative marketing and public relations; and (2) teaches every member how to share their faith and communicate God's invitation and grace.
6. Continue building an excellent ministry with children and their families.

CHANGE THE WORLD

7. Become a missional congregation—serving our neighbors near and far, standing against injustice and oppression, and practicing God's transformation and restoration of the world.
8. Build our congregation's core lay leadership and broad congregational ownership of our mission; and envision/develop/implement a missionary plan that (a) participates in the renewal of church life/religious architecture on Chicago's northside, and (b) empowers Holy Covenant members moving from Chicago to bring change and vision to their new contexts.
9. Make room for all God's people by generous congregational giving and the renewal of the Holy Covenant building and grounds to house/launch our ministries

SEEK GOD

1. Deepen and expand a contemporary-ancient worship life of joy, wonder, and challenge that awakens people to God's presence and invites people into the way of Jesus, which we believe is an amazing and compelling way to live.
Primary resources: Clergy, Minister of Music, Welcome, Spiritual Formation, Community Life, Mission
 - a. Increase attendance at weekly worship services by 20% a year for the next three years. 2008 summer (current average): 130; by summer 2009: 160; by summer 2010: 190; by summer 2011: 230.
 - b. Broaden music ministry to explore new forms of congregational and offered song—excellent, eclectic, diverse music that is a primary hook in creating Christian community and in transforming the world.
 - c. Continuously recruit and develop a large community of volunteer musicians to ensure that gifted soloists, a choir, band, or ensemble is leading music at every worship gathering.
 - d. Develop the greeter and hospitality ministries so that every guest is generously and intentionally welcomed, offered direct hospitality, shown immediate and future pathways into community, gifted with some token/reminder of our congregation, and followed up with in varied and appropriate ways.
 - e. Increase participation of lay people in liturgical leadership.
 - f. Become a certified Welcoming Congregation of The United Methodist Church.
 - g. Offer several (5-6 per year; at least one per quarter) worship services targeted to specific populations (e.g., teachers, city workers, parents, artists, students, LGBT, etc.) and unchurched folk, such as Pride, U2 Eucharist, Mardi Gras, Folk Passion, etc.

- h. Update the sanctuary sound, visual, and lighting technology systems to enable greater artistic possibilities for worship.
- i. Be attentive to Sunday morning worship schedule, making reflective changes when needed in order to make room for more people.
- j. Develop a Sunday evening worship service to launch in winter 2009 or fall 2010.
 - i) Carefully identify the target audience.
 - ii) Define the goal and objectives of the service.
 - iii) Consider impact on existing Sunday morning schedule.
 - iv) Specify the design and content.
 - v) Plan cost (financial/staff responsibility) carefully, and monitor regularly.
 - vi) Monitor progress toward objectives.
 - vii) Be intentional about connecting congregants who worship at different times.
- k. Explore a regular mid-week worship service, possibly in conjunction with our parishioners at Dignity Diner.

2. Develop a core discipleship system/curriculum for seekers and members that (re)introduces basic Christian beliefs and practices; communicates Holy Covenant's vision, culture, and language; and invites individuals to discern how their lives are part of God's project for the world.

Primary resources: Spiritual Formation, Welcome, Clergy

- a. Using our mission statement/image as a guide, develop, calendar, publicize, and teach a corresponding three-session repeating basic curriculum through which all members and attenders are invited to journey.
 - i) Discover Lunch event is general introduction
 - ii) Part 1—Seek God: basic Christian beliefs and practices, introduction to congregational context
 - iii) Part 2—Love People: spiritual disciplines; deeper understanding congregational context/denominational connection; connection link to small groups, classes, community life events
 - iv) Part 3—Change the World: spiritual gifts/passions inventory, connection link to missions, justice, action, leadership
 - v) Develop corresponding appropriate curriculum for children
- b. Map clear pathways from Gather/Worship *into* this system and into deeper community/leadership *from* this system.
- c. Preach at least yearly on this mission/discipleship system
- d. Evaluate and increase number of parishioners actively participating in the three major mission areas of the church. Match parishioner strengths and passions with church needs.

3. Root ourselves meaningfully and flexibly in the Christian faith and the Methodist/Wesleyan tradition by practicing a life of prayer; studying the Bible with committed and open minds; and engaging in theological conversations with contemporary and ancient sources and neighbors.

Primary resources: Spiritual Formation

- a. Approach our congregation and personal lives as prayer, constantly listening and watching for God's word to us, by:
 - i) Building intentional, lay-led prayer into every meeting and gathering
 - ii) Teaching people how to pray individually and corporately
 - iii) Exploring different traditions of prayer

- iv) Developing a program of personal spiritual disciplines and devotions to be re-launched every Advent and Lent with the intention of every member spending time daily in prayer
- b. Pay deeper attention to the writings of the Bible, by:
 - i) Providing short-term and long-term Bible studies of varying levels and intensities;
 - ii) Encouraging individuals to commit to a discipline of daily reading and devotions.
- c. Between small groups cycles, provide other one-time Christian education opportunities.
- d. Explore adult education programming on Sunday mornings
- e. Become a congregation that honors the Biblical practice of Sabbath, taking meaningful breaks from our work and ministry to pause, reflect, rest, and celebrate.

LOVE ALL PEOPLE

- 4. Celebrate life together by bringing people into smaller communities of belonging and friendship, in which through sharing life, spiritual practices, eating together, and having fun, they experience care, ministry, and love—and learn to see in each other the image of God.

Primary resources: Spiritual Formation, Community Life, Mission/Outreach

- a. Expand and diversify short-term small groups ministry to include life-sharing, Bible study, mission, affinity/interest, age-specific, gendered/nongendered groups
 - i) Routinize four seasonal cycles of invitation and meeting:
(Fall: September, Oct-Nov, Winter: Jan, Feb-March, Spring: Apr, May-June, Summer:late June, Jul-Aug)
 - ii) Build and train cadre of lay leaders/facilitators for this ministry
 - iii) Generate new groups (at least one every other cycle) from parishioners' ideas and willingness to lead
 - iv) As ministry deepens, develop optional longer-termed groups
 - b. Identify community life organizers/committee to plan congregational social outings (concerts, sporting events, art shows, dinners, pilgrimages, etc.) at least once every other month for relaxed fun and fellowship
 - c. Plan one weekend-away spiritual retreat and one urban one-day retreat per year.
 - d. Broaden support group ministry (AA, Employment, ESL, SA, etc.)
- 5. Architect an invitation/evangelism plan that (1) seeks and reaches out to unchurched/dischurched people in this city using creative marketing and public relations; and (2) teaches every member how to share their faith and communicate God's invitation and grace.

Primary resources: Communications, Welcome, SPRC

- a. Develop an extensive communications plan that draws on our mission to expand awareness of our congregation in the city.
 - i) Redesign website with blog and online sign-up capacity
 - ii) Expand use of social media, including Facebook, etc.
 - iii) Target outreach at non-church events (festivals, art shows, etc.)
 - iv) Write press releases/articles about unusual church events for city media
 - v) Employ traditional (banners, signage) and non-traditional marketing (viral emails, films)
 - vi) Produce business-size invitation cards for members to distribute in the city

- vii) Gather and share (1) testimonies of why people come to Holy Covenant and (2) images of church members, events, and facilities
- b. Through patterned and regular language/imagery in worship, help every member and regular attender to understand the mission of Holy Covenant and to reflect on and prepare a personal testimony, short “elevator speech,” and/or other “Come and see” ways to invite people into Christian community.
- c. Offer a regular class, group, or one-time event that teaches basic ways to share and talk about faith with other people.
- d. Practice an intentional evangelism seeking and working for diversity of race, age, gender, economic means, sexual orientation, theology, etc.

6. Continue building an excellent ministry with children and their families.

Primary resources: Children and Family Ministries

- a. Offer Sunday school for all ages every Sunday of the year; by Fall 2009, at both services
- b. Offer annual VBS (consider different formats such as one day back-to-school community festival)
- c. Continue to build a network/taskforce of parishioners to develop, implement, support, sustain and participate in our Children and Family Ministry.
- d. Support parents, equipping them with developmental, spiritual and theological resources for their children.
- e. By fall 2008, develop and implement a plan for outreach to local communities (parks, schools, other places where children and parents congregate)
- f. Identify and provide appropriate liturgical space for parents and children:
 - i) a better sanctuary space for children and parents to worship together
 - ii) a set-aside space/nursery for parents who would prefer be with children outside of the sanctuary (or to leave them in the care of excellent, certified childcare professionals)
 - iii) Sustain a space devoted to children and families' Christian Education, and research new space options as need develops.
 - iv) Enable children and families to become more involved in liturgical events and practices (e.g., child participation in the liturgy, Children's Sabbath Celebration in October)
 - v) Engage the Safe Sanctuaries process to ensure that our children's workers are educated, prepared, and vetted; and that our children are protected.

CHANGE THE WORLD

7. Become a missional congregation—serving our neighbors near and far, standing against injustice and oppression, and practicing God's transformation and restoration of the world and church.

Primary resources: Mission

- a. Beginning Fall 2008, plan at least one hands-on congregational mission day per quarter (i.e., a Saturday when people are involved in hands-on mission/service in the community; e.g., Habitat house build, Chicago Food Depository, etc.)
- b. Beginning Fall 2008, plan at least one social justice education/action event per quarter.

- c. Plan a short-term (long weekend) mission/service-learning trip outside of the Chicago area for Spring/Summer 2009.
 - d. Plan a long-term (one week) mission/service-learning trip outside of the Chicago area (national or international) for Summer 2010.
 - e. Strategize a new Reconciling plan to welcome, empower the ministries of, and bless/ritualize the relationships of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.
 - f. Become a greener church living toward a sustainable creation.
 - g. Enhance the ministry of Dignity Diner by expanding number of meals served, services (case management, etc.) provided, connection to personal and congregational spiritual life.
 - h. Explore a meaningful relationship with a congregation of a different ethnic culture.
 - i. Support one national and one international missionary.
 - j. Become a Rainbow Covenant church.
8. Build our congregation's core lay leadership and broad congregational ownership of our mission; and envision/develop/implement a missionary plan that (a) participates in the renewal of church life/religious architecture on Chicago's northside, and (b) empowers Holy Covenant members moving from Chicago to bring change and vision to their new contexts.

Primary resources: SPRC, Council, Strategy Team, Staff

- a. Adapt our current leadership structure (see attached documents for proposed adapted structure) to provide for more focused work, better communication, and increased lay ownership of mission and ministry by:
 - i) Empowering team leaders/chairs to understand themselves as ministers and primary organizers for their particular area of ministry
 - ii) Inviting new participation from congregation for an-hoc projects
 - iii) Developing and maintaining a database of interested volunteers and systemic methods for recruitment
 - iv) Moving from monthly church council meeting to a quarterly "Leader Summit" for all leaders to vision, learn, and plan for the next quarter
 - v) Establishing a Strategy team to steward the congregational vision on a monthly basis
- b. Develop attentive system of evaluating and measuring ministry success, including particular ministries and the effectiveness of the pathways between core areas of the mission.
- c. Deepen our identity as a teaching parish in relationship with Chicago seminaries by providing meaningful ministry internships for several students each academic year and training laity to partner with them in the exploration, reflection, and evaluation.
- d. By Fall 2010, explore launching an annual ministry weekend, when other parishes are invited to come and learn about inclusive ministry in an urban context
- e. Empower Holy Covenanters moving to another place to be missionaries: to seek out and/or share in launching new ministries in their new contexts
- f. Launch a United Methodist campus ministry for DePaul, Loyola, and other area college/university/technical students (currently there is no well-organized "mainline Protestant" campus ministry at DePaul or Loyola).

- g. By summer 2010, outline a plan to positively change the religious architecture of the Northside, including the possibility of launching worship experiences, classes, or other programs in other neighborhoods and/or venues (such as art galleries, school, theatre)
9. Make space for all God's people by generous congregational giving and the renewal of the Holy Covenant building and grounds to house/launch our ministries

Primary resources: Trustees, Finance

- a. Educate and invite every member to grow toward giving a tithe (10%) of their income to the ministries of the church
- b. Reclaim the second and third floors for classroom, office, ministry, meeting space
 - i) Address accessibility issues
 - ii) Consider and address impact on current space use (e.g., parsonage)
- c. Build a Stewardship Team
- d. Reinvigorate the Capital Campaign to invite pledge fulfillment and new pledges
- e. Develop a careful plan to eliminate mortgage debt from 1995 renovation (\$190K)
- f. Develop a plan to locate close and ample reserved parking for Sunday mornings
- g. Explore the possibility of air-conditioning the sanctuary.

To help provide coordination and strategic map implementation among the ministry teams, a new strategy team will meet monthly to serve as a continuing resource to help the various teams and other groups in determining time-specific goals and objectives. This group will thus serve as an aid to the Leader Summit (Church Council) in monitoring and measuring progress of the plan, and in designing feedback and reporting from the Leader Summit (Church Council) to the congregation. Keeping the congregation aware and apprised of the progress and implementation of the plan is, of course, essential to its overall success

Adopted by unanimous vote, All-Church Conference, Sunday, June 22, 2008