

## In Community with Each Other Planning Group – May 21, 2017

### **Our mission:**

To help the congregation consider opportunities for and challenges to acting on our call to be in community with each other

### **Our charge:**

Review information gathered during the November congregational meetings and prepare a summary of the most important points for the congregation; compile an inventory of the ways our congregation promotes meaningful relationships, a sense of community and pastoral care for each other; develop a comprehensive statement describing Watts Street's collective congregational care and community-building efforts; examine trends in the ways progressive Christians act as a community; provide information to the steering committee for distribution to the congregation including (but not limited to) monthly status updates, meeting minutes, and meeting times; coordinate with the steering committee on what congregational input is desired.

### **What we have learned so far:**

Through regular meetings, outreach to church staff and an examination of our current situation, we have found that WSBC offers a rich and varied array of opportunities for members to connect with each other. We have amassed an exhaustive list of these opportunities, to be included with our final report, and the quantity and quality of the entries is awesome. We already do an admirable job of being in community with each other.

Is there room for improvement? Absolutely! The current opportunities do not meet every need, we are not maximizing the full potential of every existing opportunity and we could do a better job of communicating opportunities.

Some of our key ideas:

- Build a culture of “small groups” for fellowship, support and fun, and service.
- Some have a negative reaction to the name “small groups.” We’re searching for a better name – perhaps “linking groups”?
- Improve communications about current opportunities, such as promoting the church life app and having a bulletin board dedicated to opportunities.
- Create initiatives that enhance and expand current opportunities. For example, we could create a series of meal-based gatherings called “Setting the Table for Fellowship” that

incorporates established events (Soup Suppers, Eat Dessert First) along with new ones (potluck suppers, a monthly after-church coffee hour).

- Encourage “micro-connections,” such as having a few minutes to share the peace during Sunday worship service, recruiting “super greeters” who make personal connections with members before and after Sunday service (*a la* Diane Hill) and creating a church-wide listserv.
- Try new ideas on a limited-time basis (i.e., pilot programs) to gauge interest and long-term viability.
- Recognize and respect that some people are not “joiners” and may not be comfortable being pushed to participate at a greater level.

### **What we plan to do next:**

We continue to gather information from:

- Interviews with representatives from other faith communities
- Analysis of a spreadsheet of current opportunities
- Survey and focus group feedback
- Beach Retreat discussions

### **Questions we are investigating (input welcome!):**

- What does it mean to be a welcoming community of Christians?
- What needs are not met by the current menu of opportunities to connect with each other?
- Thinking about the church universal: What types of connections characterize a beloved Christian community?
- Thinking about WSBC specifically: How do we express care for each other right now? How can we enhance and expand these practices by creating new traditions of care for our members?
- Thinking about your own connections: How can the church encourage *you*, as an individual, to develop of more or better connections?
- How do members currently stay informed about opportunities to connect, and how can we more effectively communicate information about these opportunities to long-time, new and prospective members?

***In Community With Each Other group members:***

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