

November 12, 2009

To: The Council of The United Churches of Olympia

From: The Planning Committee—Brian Hovis, Lee Johnson, Marcia Smith, Janet Anderson, Amanda Scott, Joe Arnett, and John Bowden with the assistance of Mark Dowdy and Jan Van Pelt

Subject: **Planning Committee Charter**

Last summer Council asked that a charter be prepared to outline the tasks and roles of the Planning Committee. Attached is our proposed charter.

It is drawn from the work of the Transition Team (whose work concluded in August), our consultations with Mark Dowdy and Jan Van Pelt, and our own lengthy deliberations. It outlines what we perceive to be our mission and tasks and presents how we might respond to coming key events.

We present this for your ratification knowing how important it is that Council, Planning Committee members and other key players be all on the same page.

Approved by Council, November 12, 2009

Preparing for TUCO's Future

A Charter for the Planning Committee

The Mission of the Planning Committee is to work with the Council, staff, ministries, the Interim Pastor and the congregation itself to prepare for our church's future throughout the transition period which will conclude with the arrival of the new permanent pastor. As a congregation we need to learn from our past, to know our stories, who we are and what we can celebrate, and to plan for the kind of church we wish to become.

The Planning Committee will be charged with and will be responsible for facilitating the necessary communication during the transition period. It will create and become a kind of holding environment where questions, tensions, learnings and ideas can mingle creatively until the congregation is ready to make decisions about them.

To do so, the Planning Committee has taken as its guide an Alban Institute publication by Gil Rendle and Alice Mann entitled *Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations*. In this book, *planning* is defined in terms of *conversations* and by implication, *forms of communication*. The book's introduction states

Planning is *conversation* because it is truly dialogue . . .
. Conversation is *holy* because at its best, it is about a people's understanding of their identity as a faith community . . . At its heart it centers around three critical formation questions:

- Who are we?
- What has God called us to do?
- Who is our neighbor?

There are many tools and strategies outlined in *Holy Conversations* to help us structure these conversations within our congregation. Such conversations will not bring a quick consensus on the questions listed above, but will give us instead a safe and structured place for our members to explore what is important to them and what their visions are.

The Council and Ministries Must Partner with the Planning Committee. It is important that not all of the work of the transition be done by the Planning Committee (which has only seven members) or there will be little or no congregational or leadership buy-in. On a number of occasions, the committee will ask for time on the agendas of both the Council and the ministries. In addition, the committee will ask Council members and ministry chairs to actively support the Planning Committee's work by facilitating small groups outside of ministry time or other activities that may arise.

The Tasks of the Planning Committee have already begun and will continue throughout the time that an interim pastor is employed and until the new permanent pastor arrives. There are, however, a few key events that will trigger specific tasks. They are as follows:

Key Events:

Specific Planning Committee Tasks:

Planning Committee formed.

Submit a communications plan for our “holy conversations” that will involve as many of the congregation and its leadership as possible. We will gather information about our own church as well as the larger Church outside of our walls. We will discuss strategies, consider the tools needed and work closely with the Council.

Mark Dowdy announces retirement date.

Meet with Mark Dowdy to learn from him as much about the congregation as possible—its history, how he views its future, its strengths and any roadblocks we might find along the way. (This is not in lieu of the official exit interview that is always held for a retiring pastor.)

Interim Pastor Search Committee formed.

Meet with the Interim Pastor Search Committee before it begins its search so that it is aware of the information that has been already collected. For continuity, one member of the Planning Committee will serve

on the Interim Pastor Search Committee.

Mark Dowdy retires. Consider ways in which Mark's retirement and/or its celebration event might be used as a way to continue these conversations.

Period without a pastor (3 to 6 weeks). With the Council, insure that there are persons available to the congregation to assist in worship services, times of hospitalizations, deaths, or other emergencies.

Interim Pastor arrives. Work closely with the Interim Pastor (who will become part of the Planning Committee) throughout his or her stay to plan events to ensure "holy conversations." Because the Interim Pastor will be trained in working with congregations in transition, he or she will have other tools and strategies to add to our initial plans.

Permanent Pastor Search Committee formed. Inform the search committee about the work and results of the "conversations" that have gone before, especially as they may be relevant to preparing a church profile and conversations with pastoral candidates. The Planning Committee then leaves the search committee to its work.

New Pastor arrives. Meet with the new pastor to review the work done by the congregation. At this point, the Planning Committee will have completed its work and will dissolve.

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