

UNIVERSITY LUTHERAN CHURCH OF HOPE

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT ON MISSION RENEWAL

PREPARED BY –
THE MISSION RENEWAL TASK FORCE
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND ON THE MISSION RENEWAL TASK FORCE FORMATION

Through the course of establishing the “Room for Fresh Creations” Remodeling Project in the fall of 2005 under the guidance of Kairos, a Christian resource development firm, members of the congregation raised questions and concerns about the mission of University Lutheran Church of Hope (Hope) as a congregation in a rapidly changing urban neighborhood. To address this and to better equip Hope in its strategic planning, Jeff Kjellberg, a Kairos Consultant, proposed that we undergo a mission resource development process. The Board of Commissioners supported this recommendation and appealed to Hope’s Trust Board for financial support. Funding was approved by the Trust Board in January 2006.

In March 2006, the Board of Commissioners established the Mission Renewal Task Force (MRTF) to work under the guidance of Jeff Kjellberg. The MRTF is chaired by Chris Collin and Lisa Morse. Task Force members include Sharla Aaseng, Joan Campbell (Past President), John Hustad, and Sonja Peterson. Pastor Craig Shirley and Congregational President Garvin Davenport serve as liaisons to the staff and the Board of Commissioners.

The activities of this task force revolve entirely around its obligation to objectively facilitate the elements of the Kairos mission development program committed to by the Board of Commissioners.

The Mission Renewal Task Force Objective

To explore and identify primary mission priorities for this congregation through in-depth conversations with leaders and members, formalized survey feedback from the congregation, and guidance from a professional consultant.

As a result, we will develop and implement a missional focus for Hope and ensure that its structure, staffing, and financial resources align with these mission priorities.

Through its efforts to cultivate information from a broad spectrum of sources, the MRTF has put together one of the most comprehensive pictures ever taken of Hope. Data gathering in June 2006 entailed a congregational survey of 195 members, half a dozen focus groups, some 30 one-on-one interviews, a staff and lay leader audit of Hope across a spectrum of attributes common to healthy congregations strategically organized around mission and vision, as well as a review of congregational history and key documents such as the Moral Discourse Task Force Report of 1994, the Long Range Planning Report of 1996, the Congregational Profile completed for Pastor Shirley’s call in 2001, the ISAIAH exploratory findings of 2004, the Kairos Report of 2005, and the Worship Commission Task Force Report of 2005.

This Comprehensive Report on Mission Renewal reflects an in-depth look at how we define ourselves as a congregation in living out our Christian faith. What is important to us? What needs are we meeting? Where is our energy going? What opportunities do we see for our future? What needs aren’t we meeting? What concerns do we have?

The content provided in this report serves as starting point for re-imagining what Hope can be and do in the years to come. It serves as the basis for redefining our missional focus so that our

congregation, armed with new insights, can knowledgeably and prayerfully decide on what paths best suit our mission and our call to be the people of God in this place.

OVERVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS

What have we learned about ourselves through this intensive process of introspection? Well...

- **Desire for Membership Growth:** Nine in ten (90%) members surveyed view membership growth as a priority for the future. However, as Kairos observed about Hope in its 2005 evaluation of our congregation’s readiness to move forward on a major remodeling program, we are a congregation largely comprised of “thinkers” rather than “doers.” If growth in membership is that important to so many of us, we are faced with the challenge of understanding where we have the best opportunity to cultivate that growth. What decisive actions can we as a congregation take based on the conclusions that result from our collective thinking?
- **Clarity of Hope’s Vision and Purpose:** One in three of us (33% of those surveyed) do not see that Hope has a clear sense of its mission. So although two-thirds of the congregation is not experiencing any anxiety over focus and direction, there is a sizeable segment of membership that hungers for more clarity. This finding should not come as a surprise since this exploratory process was born out of members’ concerns regarding a general lack of intentional purpose, which were expressed during the “Room for Fresh Creations” fundraising efforts. Further feedback in this Mission Renewal process – both qualitatively and quantitatively – validates that we indeed have a need to more clearly communicate what it is we are all about.
- **To Narrow Our Focus or Maintain a Diversity of Missions:** Hope has a history of simultaneously having many irons in the fire. Today – in 2006 – the majority of the congregation (65% of those surveyed) has no desire to hone in on just a couple mission priorities. This is important to understand as Hope goes about overhauling its mission and vision statements to more clearly articulate who we are and why we are here, and to intentionally align resources to tend to our priorities.
- **Our “Top” Mission Priorities:** When asked about specific mission possibilities, *Education* emerged at the top of the list – nearly every respondent (96%) to the Congregational Survey was in agreement that this should be a high priority. *However*, when pressed to identify *two specific* ministries of personal preference that should be a priority for Hope, interest in *Education* takes a backseat to several other preferences. While some bigger “buckets” of preference emerge, a *majority* voice for any one *particular* ministry does not:
 - ◆ Almost half (46%) of the congregation prioritizes *Worship* and/or *Music and the Arts*.
 - ◆ Almost half (44%) prioritizes *Youth, Children’s* and/or *Family* ministries.
 - ◆ Nearly one in four (23%) focus in on *Personal Spiritual Nurturing* and/or *Small Groups*.

- ◆ Behind this come *Education* (17%), *Outreach to the Community* and/or *University Students* (17%) followed by *Social Justice* (16%) and a smattering of other niche ministries (e.g., *Needs beyond the Community*, *GLBT*, *Singles* and *Seniors*).

Given members' reluctance to narrow the focus of our energies to a select few missions, it comes then as no surprise that there are not one or two clear "winners" in which we can confidently say majority rules. And while 90% of the congregation view growth as a priority for the future, it is interesting to note how inwardly focused our priorities actually are. Outreach – whether to the immediate community or beyond – is not at the forefront of people's priorities for the vast majority of members. Collectively, we are quite focused on what we desire for ourselves when come to church versus what we expect from a church in helping us live out servant-hood throughout the week. This poses some interesting questions about how we leverage the diversity of our interests into growth opportunities for this congregation.

- **Overwhelming Desire for Laity-Led Leadership:** Whether in the one-on-one interviews, the focus groups, or open-ended comments of the Congregational Survey, members consistently express a desire to see lay leadership as the driver behind what needs to happen in the implementation of our future mission priorities. Staff is seen as needing to empower, equip and enable the laity for carrying out the work that needs to get done. As one member summarized it, "... *If we want Hope to continue it has to be done by the lay leadership. And besides, whose mission is it anyway? If the leadership takes over, it becomes biased and is not the mission of the congregation anymore...*" Drawing on what is seen as the untapped potential of our laity also emerges as the most common theme when members are asked what they see as our greatest opportunities for the future. The desire for greater involvement of the laity as a whole is also reflected in how few of our members (54% of those surveyed) view Hope as emphasizing a gift-oriented ministry in which people are aided in identifying their spiritual gifts and living them out. This, then, begs the question of what needs to happen differently for Hope to maximize its potential in regard to lay leadership? What – in a world of intense competition for one's free time – are members really asking for when they express a desire to be more involved as laity? What does the relationship between staff and laity need to look like?
- **Nurturing Our Faith:** When asked what personally stimulates and nurtures individuals' faith, members in focus groups and one-on-one interviews overwhelmingly hold up their relationships to others and the sense of community they experience at Hope. This is of great importance to the Congregational Survey respondents as well. Following close behind this is the great value placed on our preaching, worship, music and intellectual challenge as instruments for nurturing faith.
- ◆ **Breadth and Depth of People, Relationships and Community:** This emphasis emerges unsolicited as one of the key foundations for our congregational community. Whether in the one-on-one interviews, the focus groups, or open-ended comments of the Congregational Survey, members consistently refer to the relationships they have with others and the value they place in their church community. This is a key ingredient in what we say we personally need to stimulate and nurture our faith. It is among the leading criteria identified when looking to a church to meet one's faith needs. It is the

single most frequently mentioned thing that focus group participants mentioned liking about Hope.

As lifted up in the various avenues for open-ended commentary, members point to a wide range of ways in which they experience the cultivation of relationships and community, such as small groups, Bible study, prayer, collaboration on special projects and service to others, etc. So, while *Small Group* ministry *per se* does not resonate with members as a high priority for future mission possibilities, the kinds of things that small groups yield are deeply valued by our community. What, then, does this mean for how we minister to each other? How do we factor relationship building and community into our ideas for growth?

- ♦ **Preaching:** Hope has a long history of looking to its pulpit for “*challenging*,” “*provocative*” and “*relevant*” sermons. The importance of preaching correlates to the 2001 congregational description associated with Pastor Shirley’s call, as well as the preaching concerns emerging from the 2005 Worship Commission Task Force Report in which – as noted by the Historical Documents Review team – members were looking for more dynamic and exciting, energizing sermons and worship experiences. Preaching remains of great importance today and greatly influences members’ perceptions of the experience they leave with on Sunday morning. There are indications through member feedback in this Mission Renewal process that our paradigms are shifting for how we go about delivering on the expectation that we provide members with consistently high quality preaching.
- ♦ **Worship and Music:** Traditional-style worship and excellent music have long been associated with Hope, and inspiring worship is tremendously valued by this congregation. The reviewers of the historical documents included in the MRTF data-gathering process noted that five years ago there was little concern about what was happening in worship but in recent years this view appears to be shifting. Today, one in three (35%) members are in *strong* agreement that Hope’s worship services inspire people to come in the spirit of joy rather than duty. Given a congregation of our size with an overwhelming desire to increase our numbers, this begs the question of what it would take to achieve *strong* agreement from the other two thirds of the congregation. Closer investigation of this reveals that the younger you are, the more inclined you are to find yourself uninspired by our worship – particularly if you are a parent of children between the ages of 6 and 15 (34% of this segment disagrees that Hope’s worship is inspirational). What would Hope need to do to ensure that these members feel inspired when they leave the sanctuary on Sunday mornings? If we don’t take this into consideration, what impact are we having on our opportunities for growth?
- ♦ **Intellectual Challenge:** Members perceive Hope as a place where weighty topics can be discussed and explored, and they appreciate opportunities to expand their knowledge and understanding. There is opportunity to provide more interaction in intellectually stimulating ways, as expressed by members in the focus groups, one-on-one interviews and the Congregational Survey who are looking for more in the way of Bible study, topical small groups, discourse on faith and Christianity, etc.
- **Youth:** When presented with specific mission *possibilities*, over half (52%) of the members surveyed were in *strong* agreement that our 7th-12th Grade kids should be a

priority. This is the only ministry amongst those evaluated to receive a majority “vote” when looking at where members indicate they “Strongly Agree” (versus “Agree”). One out of five members (20%) identifies Youth Ministry as one of their top two ministry preferences. Not surprisingly, parents – particularly with children in this age range – feel strongly about Youth being a priority. But it is not just parents who indicate a desire for this being a missional focus. Although the percentages are smaller within the various demographic segments, we also see interest in Youth Ministry among younger members, seniors, and those without children.

A desire for commitment to young people is reinforced when you take into consideration the percentage of members (24%) viewing Children’s (Birth – 6th Grade) and Family ministries to be among their top two preferences. If we are to take the congregation’s desire for membership growth seriously, what do we need to be offering to better meet the needs of our young people and their families? What actions can we take that will be attractive to prospective members with families?

- **Outreach:** When survey respondents were asked whether they agreed that specific ministries should be a priority for Hope, outreach ministries – whether it be the local community, University students specifically, or needs beyond our immediate locale – are of less interest to current members than other areas previously discussed here (i.e., worship ministry, youth-related ministries). When pressed to identify their top two mission priorities for Hope, evangelistic outreach to the community and to University students rise to the top for 17% of members surveyed – obviously not an overwhelming majority. Ministering to the needs *beyond* the surrounding community (e.g., through ecumenical, inter-faith efforts, the ELCA, globally, etc.) is priority for fewer than one in ten (7%) members surveyed.

However, in one-on-one and focus group interviews, members view Hope as having a responsibility to the outside world. There is a consistent desire to see us doing a better job of connecting to the surrounding community, and to University students in particular – although there are mixed opinions about how much we should make this an effort and in what way we should go about it. The same can be said for global outreach; many of us feel it is important that we play a role in this, but to what degree and just how we would do that varies.

Given the feedback throughout this data gathering process, it appears that Hope is challenged to determine how we strike the right balance between our own inwardly focused needs and those of the broader world we live in. As one member described it, *“When we focus on making ourselves strong internally, without a connection to something external, we lose spirit. We need to be deeply connected not only to the Bible, but to the earth and the community.”* If we believe this to be true, how then do we best go about striking the right balance and appropriately aligning our resources in ministry?

- **Social Justice:** Concern for Social Justice is a distinguished part of Hope’s legacy. Over the years, we have changed our focus as pastors have changed and society has changed. Today, our perceptions regarding Social Justice as a ministry focus are complex. There are differing ideas within the congregation as to what “social justice” means and what issues should take priority. In one-on-one interviews and focus groups, it surfaces as a perception of our current mission, and less so as an expressed desire for future mission. However, for all its prominence in years past, just 16% of members surveyed identify it as one of their top two mission priorities.

As a growth driver for the current times we live in, this raises the question of where we place emphasis on Social Justice.

- **What We Say about Ourselves:** In the Congregational Survey, one-on-one interviews and focus groups, participants were given an opportunity to share how they describe Hope to someone who is not familiar with our congregation. We primarily see ourselves as:
 - ♦ A traditional worshipping, musical community
 - ♦ A “thinking” community
 - ♦ An open, accepting, welcoming community
 - ♦ Liberal, progressive
 - ♦ Socially active
 - ♦ Friendly, caring

What has been summarized in the Executive Summary is just the tip of the iceberg. Each of the areas discussed here possess interesting facets that merit further exploration and will inform our thinking about where we go from here.

In the pages that follow, you will find key learnings from Phase I of the Mission Renewal process, along with MRTF observations and further thought-provoking questions that have emerged as we grapple with what all of this means.

In Phase II of the Mission Renewal process, the MRTF, Board, staff and congregational members at large begin to absorb these results and start re-imagining what Hope can be and do in the years to come. This will lead to specific action items and initiatives centered on a redefined missional focus for this congregation.



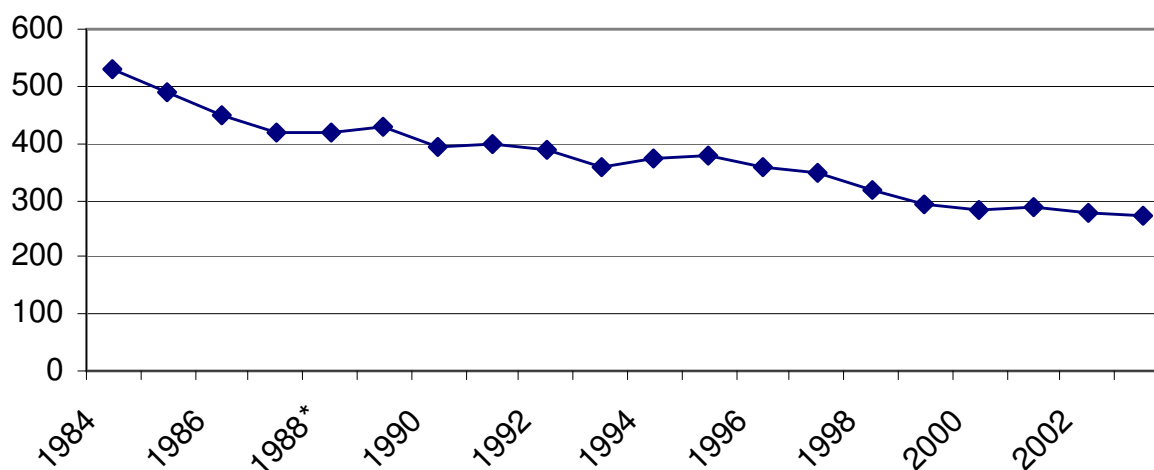
TASK FORCE KEY FINDINGS

OUR DESIRE FOR GROWTH AND FUTURE PRESENCE

There is no doubt in the minds of Hope’s members that membership growth is a must. Four in ten members surveyed (41%) *Strongly Agree* that adding to our numbers is a priority; another five in ten (49%) *Agree*. This accounts for 90% of the members surveyed in the Mission Renewal Congregational Survey.

The following chart illustrates the annual average weekly attendance over the past two decades to the present. There is no denying that our weekly attendance numbers have been on the decline.

Average Weekly Attendance



The attendance averages in the above graph include Easter and Christmas holidays. To gain a better understanding of typical average attendance on a “regular” Sunday over the past several years, the MRTF looked more closely at the attendance data from 2004 to the present.

Average Weekly Attendance Excluding Mid-Week Lenten, Holy Week, Easter and Christmas Services*

	<u>Jan - June</u>	<u>Jan - Dec</u>
2004	260	254
2005	243	246
2006	240	To be determined

**Given inconsistency in recordkeeping for Lenten mid-week and Holy Week services from year to year, these services along with Easter and Christmas were excluded from the average calculations.*

Concerns over declining worship attendance and the financial implications of this trend are nothing new to Hope over the last decade. Does this trend mean we are, in fact, a “dying congregation” and we simply need to accept this? Feedback from one-on-one and focus group participants indicate that most members don’t think this is the case, and for those that do there is a strong desire to turn this trend around. There is also a pragmatic understanding that there must be a purpose and reason for our existence in the world, as well as recognition that remaining viable well into the future requires making changes in how we do things. This is reflected in the following comments.

“It is important that Hope exist in the future because we have such a strong reputation within the Lutheran Church and there are so many of us who have bonded within this community... What are the possibilities to fill up the church again? It is a challenge to keep the full staff that we have with our numbers. Where is the future growth going to come from? We have been talking about this for the last six or seven years, but it is mostly talk. We have been comfortable and complacent about our mission. We can’t fall back on our laurels based on our history. We have to be ready to make some significant changes.”

“There are needs that we can meet and a role that we can play in the metro area. Failure to exist in the future is an indictment on our inability (or refusal?) to accept the changing needs of our congregation and community. We have so much going for us that there is no excuse for not making improvements where improvements need to be made.”

“Lutheran congregations do fade away, particularly as our society becomes more and more secular. City congregations die as more people move to the suburbs. However, the death of a progressive Lutheran church would be a particularly sad thing, as it would mean that the conservative mega-churches are winning.”

“If Hope doesn’t or won’t carry out its call / mission, then there is no reason to exist. That would be a waste of resources. Existence should serve a purpose.”

So if 90% of our members are concerned about growth, what is driving this desire to increase our membership? We asked members in the one-on-one interviews and focus groups what they saw as their greatest concerns for Hope. Dwindling numbers and our financial viability are by far the predominant worries.

The following comments represent the concerns on people’s minds. For some, it is the opportunity cost of dealing with financial strain.

“The financial burden Hope has. I’m worried that we can’t sustain it. The percentage of money going to interest is money not going to mission, staffing, etc. There’s a lot of pressure financially. A lot of time is going to go into raising money.”

Some see it as a practical matter – the greater our numbers, the more to share in the financial burden.

“We are a ‘wannabe’ church, but are shrinking. We want lots of programs, which take a lot of energy and resources and are very staff-intensive.”

For others, growth is less of an issue – it’s more a matter of getting current members to steer more of their dollars toward Hope.

“This place isn’t going to go out of business. What I’d like to see, however, are people committed enough to the mission of the congregation that they tithe. There are all kinds of things we could do: host a homeless shelter, fund seminary students, install air conditioning. The problem isn’t that there isn’t enough money; the problem is that it’s still in members’ pockets. You can’t do ministry if it isn’t funded.”

And there are those who feel we simply need to shift our paradigm and quit viewing new members through a lens of dollar signs.

“Money is not my greatest concern—money is a question you always have with you. All organizations have money concerns—even Harvard and Yale have money concerns! The bigger concern is opting for safety. It would be easier to focus on doing less, but we would sacrifice all our potential. Money is the easy part. Human capital is harder. New members do not equal more money. New members equal a greater potential to carry out our mission.”

For most congregations, there is a correlation between the size of a congregation’s membership and its financial well-being. One can draw the conclusion that without bringing in more members, our ability to maintain a wide range of missions in ministry will remain a stressful challenge for this congregation.

Over the past two years, the average weekly worship attendance appears to have stabilized at around 240 -250 worshippers on a typical, non-holiday Sunday, which is a positive thing. However, given the current budgetary strains on this congregation, we are faced with the hard fact that the income generated from the existing base of members isn’t sufficient for indefinitely sustaining the expenses we currently have, let alone doing an adequate job getting the word out about Hope and funding the diversity of ministries we see as priorities.

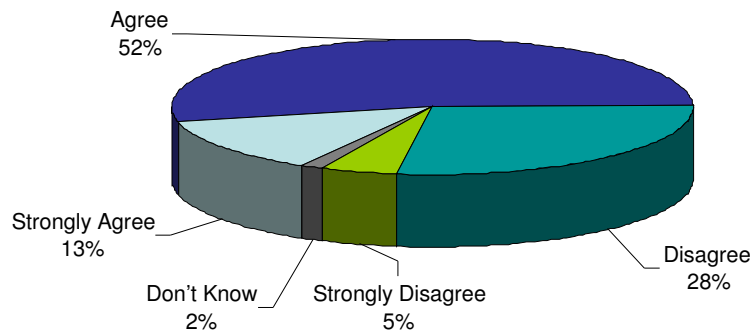
As a mainline church, we are not alone in this challenge. The irony is that we have a highly talented, committed congregation and staff, strong worship (for the most part), several successful capital campaign appeals over the past decade, a beautiful building currently undergoing major updating, and yet none of this has reversed our attendance trends. If we wish to have a presence in the Lutheran community decades from now, what do we need to be doing differently? Where will our future growth come from? What resources can we afford to put behind it?

“My greatest concern is that the leadership – staff and Board – won’t take the results of this mission renewal undertaking to heart and make change where change is needed. It requires that each and every one of us in a leadership role step up to the plate, get engaged on behalf of the congregation, and allow ourselves to venture into terrain that may feel uncomfortable. Without this level of commitment, the odds of our ability to thrive in the future are seriously compromised.”

OUR PERCEPTIONS OF HOPE'S VISION AND PURPOSE

In the Congregational Survey, members shared their perceptions about the clarity of Hope's vision and purpose. On a four-point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree), two-thirds (65%) of survey respondents agree that we have a clear vision and purpose, although *strong* agreement (at 13%) is not all that strong.

Hope has a clear vision and purpose. (n=195)



We took a look at which members see Hope as having the greatest clarity about our vision and purpose as a congregation. **You are most inclined to have *strong* agreement with this statement if you:**

- Have been a member less than a decade (21% of this membership segment).
- Have a household income under \$50,000 (26% of this income segment).
- Contribute up to \$2,000 in giving to Hope annually (20% of this annual contribution segment).

Those most critical of Hope having a clear vision and purpose (i.e., Disagree or Strongly Disagree with this statement) tend to be:

- 51-64 years in age (48% of this age bracket).
- Parents with children still at home (47% of this segment).
- From households earning over \$75,000 a year (53% of the members in this income segment).
- Our biggest givers (61% of the segment contributing \$4,000+ annually).

This indicates that the more you earn and financially support Hope, the more inclined you are to view Hope as lacking clarity in vision and purpose. What does the contrast between those who see us as having a clear vision and purpose, and those who do not tell us? How does it inform our thinking about growth?

PERCEPTIONS OF CURRENT VERSUS FUTURE MISSION IN MINISTRY

We asked members in focus groups and one-on-one interviews what they perceived to be Hope’s *current* mission. We then asked these members what they thought our *future* mission in ministry should be. The following table compares the predominant themes associated with current mission to those associated with what members would like to see in the future.

Members’ Perceptions of Hope’s <u>Current</u> Mission in Ministry	Members’ Perceptions of What Hope’s <u>Future</u> Mission Priority Should be
(the top five most frequent responses—highest to lowest—in focus group & one-on-one interviews)	(the top five most frequent responses—highest to lowest—in focus group & one-on-one interviews)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ I don’t know (17 mentions) ♦ A lot of different missions (10) ♦ Social Justice (10) ♦ Being open, accepting and caring (9) ♦ Grappling with the hard issues (8) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Tending to the needs of our members (20 mentions) ♦ Worship / music (8) ♦ Education (8) ♦ Student / University / Neighborhood Outreach (9) ♦ Outreach beyond our walls (8)

As can be seen, these top-of-mind lists are very different. The perceptions of our *current* mission reflect a fair degree of uncertainty. The desired priority for *future* mission of focus group participants and one-on-one interviewees largely echoes the inward focus of ministry priorities that is present in the wider Congregational Survey results.

MEMBER COMMENTARY ON HOPE’S CURRENT MISSION

The following member comments are representative of the themes emerging around perceptions of what our *current* mission is today.

I don’t know:

“I don’t think we have one. Various people might say we do outreach to the student community, and though we try, I don’t think we have it as a missional emphasis. I’ve heard people say our mission is to do social justice, but in reality the congregation as a whole does very little social justice work, though individual members of the congregation do much in their daily lives. I think we’re floundering in terms of what our mission is.”

A lot of different missions:

“I think it has a lot of missions – I don’t know if I can choose one. We kind of focus on the social justice mission, but I don’t know if it’s really pushed in all areas. It’s like youth ministries – there’s a little corner for youth ministries – and I see that for social justice as well. Maybe there’s just this idea of being welcoming that makes for so many missions, otherwise, there’s a feeling of exclusion. So maybe that’s the mission – inclusivity or welcoming.”

Social Justice:

“To know Christ and to live in a Christ like way. Our mission has stumbled now and then. We have a strong focus on social justice. There is still a core part of the congregation that is still aligned with this mission. There is also a strong part of our mission to reach out to the communities in which we live. The ISALAH project is a rekindling of our social justice stance within our communities.”

Being open, accepting and caring:

“As a non-Lutheran and Catholic, I have never felt ostracized. That’s the one thing that sticks out most about this community. I have never perceived anyone not to be welcome here.”

Grappling with the hard issues:

“I like our edginess, our willingness to grasp ‘the next hard issue.’ But we’re not trying to share or spread it. ISALAH is a step in that way.”

MEMBER COMMENTARY ON WHAT HOPE’S FUTURE MISSION PRIORITIES SHOULD BE

The following is a sampling of member comments representative of the themes emerging when members in the focus groups and one-on-one interviews were asked what they thought Hope’s mission priorities should be for the future.

Tending to the needs of our members:

“If people don’t have peace and nurture at home, how will they have energy for outreach?”

Worship / Music:

“Provide a mixing of the old/traditional with the new/contemporary.”

Education:

“Become a stellar center for education—not a Seminary—but have enough teaching, educational, open thinking opportunities that our future lies there. We have a congregation where people are not afraid to ask questions—which is so unique. In working with Rollie Martinson, we learned that education is the cornerstone for social justice, that when you educate youth, it leads them to take action on social justice issues.”

Student / University / Neighborhood Outreach:

“Look at the neighborhood. Hope is not seen as a neighborhood church. What would that look like? More students, more of a transient population. Families, singles, young people: find those people and minister to them. Find those who want to put their talents to work. Be more concerned about neighborhood issues. Bunge elevator is being torn down and family housing is intended for the area. Unsafe properties, derelict landlords need to be watched. Older buildings outfitted for students’ cable and computer uses. Kids and after-school care need attention.”

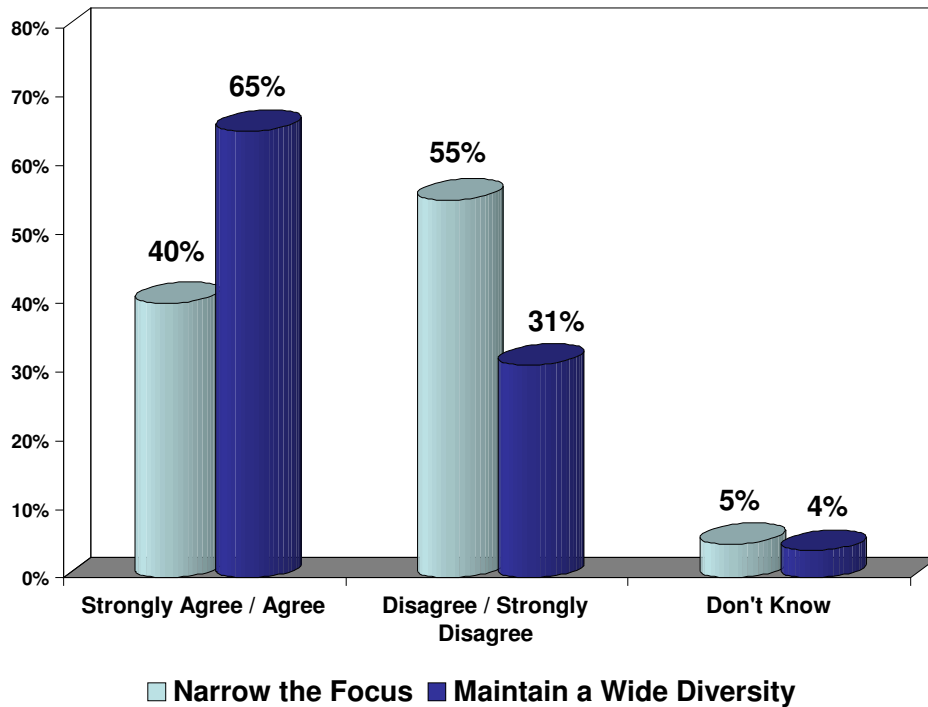
Outreach beyond our walls:

“We need to identify Hope’s mission in the world. We should be in the world. We should be way more involved in ecology and the environment, especially global warming, and peace because we are well off and educated. People like us need to be out there on the front lines.”

TO NARROW OUR FOCUS OR TO MAINTAIN A WIDE DIVERISTY OF MISSIONS...

There are more Hope members wishing to maintain a wide diversity of mission priorities than those wishing to limit the scope of our ministries. We asked this in two different ways in the Congregational Survey and came up with the same answer.

**Hope Should Narrow its Focus to Two or Three Mission Priorities.
Versus
Hope Should Maintain a Wide Diversity of Mission Priorities.
(n=195)**



One member in a focus group summed it up this way:

“You are invited here to question things and to wonder how in life you are relating to Christ. We are diverse; I like that. You can get more done with a larger focus but many people doing many things feels more like life itself. That’s being disciples.”

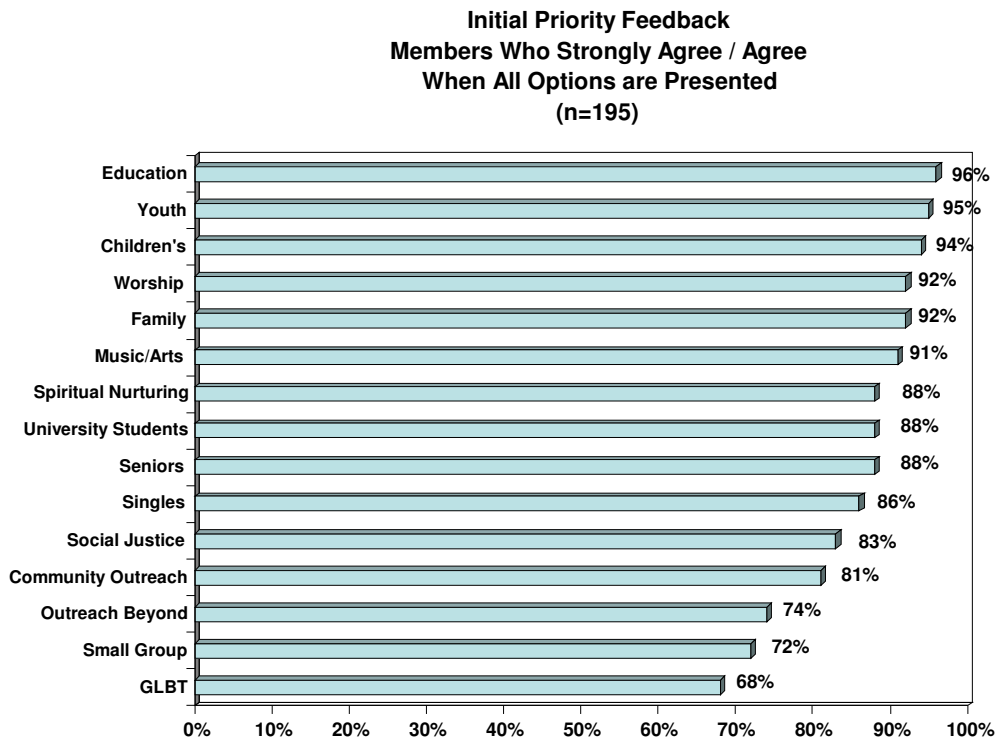
Our preference for diversity in mission is important to understand as Hope goes about overhauling its mission directive and redefining where it applies its resources to our ministries. Our vision and mission statement needs to reflect this, clearly articulating who we are and why we are here.

A CLOSER LOOK AT OUR PRIORITIES

In the Congregational Survey, we took a two-step approach to getting a read on members' sense of priorities.

First, we asked members to think about 15 different areas of ministry. How strongly did they agree or disagree that the particular ministry in question be a priority for Hope? Using a four-point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree), members rated each area of ministry.

The following graph illustrates the rank order of agreement from high to low. As can be seen, *Education* is perceived by the highest percentage of members – an overwhelming majority – as a ministry that should be a priority for Hope. At least two thirds of those surveyed indicated that each of the ministries identified should be a priority.



Next, using these 15 areas of ministry, we asked members to narrow their preference down to the two that were of most importance to them. No one ministry was identified by the *majority* of the survey respondents as an area of priority. However, some larger “buckets” of preference do emerge:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Worship & Music</i> 2. <i>Youth & Family</i> 3. <i>Spiritual Nurturing/ Small Groups</i> 4. <i>Education</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. <i>Social Justice</i> 6. Various niche ministries (i.e., outreach to the community and beyond, University students, GLBT, Singles, Seniors) |
|---|---|

ACTUAL PRIORITY PREFERENCES OF THE CONGREGATION

(The percentage of survey respondents by congregational segment indicating the following ministries as one of their *TOP TWO* preferences.)

	Total	Gender		Age				Households		Large Contributors (\$4000+ annually)
		Male	Female	30 & under	31-50	51-64	65+	without Children at Home	with Children at Home	
n =	195	70	119	30	53	52	42	115	58	54
Worship	32%	31%	34%	20%	42%	25%	38%	30%	33%	44%
Music and the Arts	<u>14%</u>	<u>23%</u>	<u>10%</u>	<u>17%</u>	<u>8%</u>	<u>23%</u>	<u>14%</u>	<u>16%</u>	<u>12%</u>	<u>11%</u>
	46%	54%	44%	37%	50%	48%	52%	46%	45%	55%
Youth (7th-12th grade)	20%	17%	20%	30%	17%	23%	10%	15%	31%	22%
Children's (birth-6th grade)	10%	11%	9%	7%	8%	17%	5%	11%	9%	9%
Family	<u>14%</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>18%</u>	<u>10%</u>	<u>17%</u>	<u>6%</u>	<u>24%</u>	<u>15%</u>	<u>16%</u>	<u>9%</u>
	44%	35%	47%	47%	42%	46%	39%	41%	56%	40%
Personal spiritual nurturing	17%	19%	17%	23%	17%	17%	14%	18%	14%	7%
Small Group	<u>6%</u>	<u>6%</u>	<u>6%</u>	<u>3%</u>	<u>8%</u>	<u>8%</u>	<u>5%</u>	<u>3%</u>	<u>9%</u>	<u>13%</u>
	23%	25%	23%	26%	25%	25%	19%	21%	23%	20%
Education	17%	16%	19%	7%	26%	12%	19%	20%	16%	22%
Social Justice	16%	17%	15%	20%	23%	14%	14%	13%	26%	20%
<u>Niche Ministries</u>										
Community Outreach	9%	6%	11%	10%	4%	14%	7%	12%	3%	9%
University Students	8%	11%	7%	20%	6%	12%	0%	11%	3%	7%
GLBT	7%	9%	6%	7%	9%	6%	5%	8%	5%	6%
Singles	3%	4%	1%	7%	4%	0%	0%	2%	3%	2%
Seniors	2%	1%	3%	0%	2%	0%	7%	3%	2%	0%
Outreach beyond the Community	<u>7%</u>	<u>9%</u>	<u>6%</u>	<u>10%</u>	<u>6%</u>	<u>6%</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>9%</u>	<u>5%</u>	<u>7%</u>
	36%	40%	34%	54%	31%	38%	26%	45%	21%	31%

INTERESTING OBSERVATIONS REGARDING OUR PRIORITIES

As previously noted, members indicated a strong desire to maintain a wide diversity of mission priorities rather than narrow the focus. The results summarized above certainly reflect a broad range of interests within the congregation. We'd be particularly challenged as a congregation if members had indicated a strong desire to narrow our focus, yet identified such wide interests in ministry.

If you look closely at the preceding table, you'll see some interesting differences within the various segments of the congregation. For instance:

- For men, over half (54%) prioritize *Worship & Music*, particularly the music and arts aspect of things where they place significantly more emphasis on this than do women.
- *Worship & Music* is of importance to a significant portion of women (44%) but *Family* ministry is just as much a priority, if not more so.
- For those under 30, about one third (37%) identify *Worship & Music* as priority, which is significantly less than members in older age brackets. Another third (30%) prioritize 7th-12th Grade *Youth*. Compared to all other age segments, this group is the most supportive of ministries that fall in the realm of “niche ministries”.
- Those in the 31-50 age range resemble the congregation as a whole for the most part, although they are more inclined to identify *Education* (26%) and *Social Justice* (23%) as one of their top two priorities.
- For those members over the age of 65, *Worship & Music* is a priority for half of them (52%). They also place emphasis on *Youth & Family* ministries (39%), where their interests tilt less toward the 7th-12th Grade Youth and more toward a focus on the family. Amazingly, older members don't prioritize *Seniors* Ministry. Is this perhaps a sign of their graciousness? Their concern for the next generations? Their maturity in their Christian faith?
- Households with kids – versus those without kids at home – value *Worship & Music* (45%) but, not surprisingly, a larger percentage (56%) prioritize *Youth & Family* ministry. These households are also among the most inclined to identify *Social Justice* as a priority (26%).
- Among Hope's biggest contributors (those giving \$4,000 or more annually), *Worship & Music* ranks among the top two priority preferences for over half (55%). Beyond that, this segment's priorities tend to resemble the congregation as a whole.

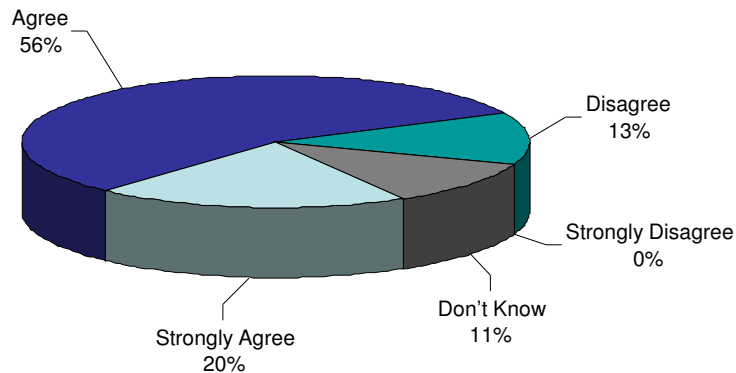
As we think about growth and drawing people in, how can we leverage the knowledge we have about the different hot buttons appealing to the various segments of our congregation? How can the observations outlined above inform our thinking and our actions?

WHAT DO WE THINK ABOUT THE ROLES OF LAITY AND STAFF?

LEADERSHIP AND HOPE'S FUTURE MISSION

A key characteristic that Kairos sees in churches living out a mission-oriented focus is their ability to build empowering leadership within the congregation – leadership that is not centrally focused on one particular individual. Congregational Survey respondents were asked to evaluate how well Hope builds empowering leadership. As the following graphic illustrates, disagreement that we build empowering leadership is low (13%) and one in five respondents are very enthusiastic about how well we do this (20% in strong agreement), leaving approximately half (56%) of all survey respondents with some level of positive feeling regarding this characteristic.

**Hope builds empowering leadership (i.e., leadership that is not centered around one individual).
(n=195)**



Over the past decades, Hope has had some strong pastoral figures. At the same time, we have also been blessed with strong laity. Feedback through this Mission Renewal process indicates that today, in 2006, members are not looking for one central figure to drive our future destiny. Quite the contrary, members emphasize the desire to see laity in the driver's seat. Does this reflect an understanding that clergy cannot realistically be expected to "do it all"? Is it perhaps a reflection of the confidence we have in ourselves as laity to lead the way forward? Does it imply an expectation of self-sufficiency that may be ingrained in the demographic and psychographic make-up of our members? Or is this a reflection of the times we live in and the wider culture where it has been predicted by some church experts that the church needs to see a new assertion of lay leadership?

Member perspectives on this are offered in the following comments:

"Leadership has to be based in strong lay leadership participation. If lay leadership flattens out, we can't be successful. Energy always has to come from lay leadership. It can't be just one leader, because when they leave, then the leadership leaves."

"The pastor's role is to help the congregation facilitate its own leadership. The pastor can educate and help members take care of themselves, to not be dependent on pastors but to be mature Christians."

As is evidenced by the growth in some churches today, the model in which a congregation is led by a charismatic, evangelical leader can work for some congregations. As one member articulated in this Mission Renewal feedback process, taking this approach at Hope has its challenges:

“The King Pastor/Elders model works elsewhere but Hope wouldn’t allow that and wouldn’t want it here. There are no followers here. Many of our leaders are doing stuff in the world. This is a challenge of this congregation. How do we unite?”

THE ROLE OF THE LAITY IN IMPLEMENTING HOPE’S FUTURE MISSION

In focus groups and one-on-one interviews, members were asked how they envision the role of lay leadership and staff in implementing Hope’s mission priorities. Affirmations of the quality of our laity and the critical importance they have to our existence are recurring themes. In the words of our members:

“Lay leadership is strong at Hope. They have connections to life outside of church and can shape programs that connect to our lives. The voice of laity must remain powerful. We have a lot of talent.”

“It’s absolutely essential. Without strong lay leadership and not benefiting from their many talents I don’t think we can continue to have the impact we have the potential for.”

“The laity in this congregation is strong; we keep getting strong people on the board who are intelligent, respectful, and focused on God’s work.”

“Congregations with strong lay leadership are the most vital. Hope has been gifted with all the right people for our needs.”

There was no expressed desire on the part of focus group participants or one-on-one interviewees that staff should dominate the determination and implementation of Hope’s mission priorities. Member feedback consistently describes the laity as the entity owning our mission in ministry, as is reflected by the following comments:

“Laity should lead the charge.”

“I have never seen anything ‘take’ around here if lay aren’t in charge of it. Lay leadership is crucial.”

“Laity should identify/determine needs and work with staff to carry out that mission. Staff needs to bring their ideas from previous churches and the larger church, but the laity needs to set the goals.”

THE ROLE OF STAFF IN IMPLEMENTING HOPE’S FUTURE MISSION

So where do member see the staff fitting into the greater scheme of things? Overwhelmingly, focus group participants and one-on-one interviewees describe a role in which staff is there to guide, encourage, motivate and support the laity in its ministries.

“Seek gifts in people and tap into those gifts. Be a facilitator.”

“Staff should support a climate for lay people to start initiatives.”

“Staff needs to give lay leaders the tools and then give them room to lead.”

“Support and guide; bring expertise. Act as co-leaders.”

“Nothing can really happen unless lay people are determined to make them happen ... but it's as true that nothing can happen unless staff can be there to support those ministries, encourage and educate, etc.”

Members describe a staff role that involves administratively managing what takes place from day to day:

“Staff is the hub of the wheel.”

“Can staff serve as a communication hub for noticing, connecting with people who are absent?”

“Staff has to be able to pull all the loose ends together.”

“Make sure things are going right in day-to-day duties (e.g., web page)”

“Staff can do the day-to-day business necessary to enable [lay leadership].”

Members have an expectation that staff will hold up our mission before the congregation:

“Keeping our mission fresh in the minds of the congregation.”

“There should be a mentioning of the church's vision, its purpose so new members know what it's all about, what it stands for.”

Members look to staff for recruiting volunteers and training:

“...What we really need is a Volunteer Coordinator who would make it a mission to meet with each and every member of the congregation and plug them into appropriate roles.”

“Staff will have to continue to provide greater and pertinent training to the various commissions.”

“Given their status as paid staff, they are the thread of continuity ... It's disappointing that there is little orientation for a newly elected Board member, and there are very haphazard mechanisms for carrying the torch forward on anything that is long-range in nature.”

Members look to staff for visitation and connecting:

“Visitation to the whole congregation, not just the elderly, particularly regarding grief, illness.”

“Why don't we respond sooner, connect with people who are absent?”

Members look for preaching and education:

“Sermons that focus on theological connections to the gospel and scriptures.”

“Expertise in the Bible and running congregations can keep us grounded in good practices.”

And for recruiting new members:

“Staff tries to involve new members, to recognize new members. Continue to do this.”

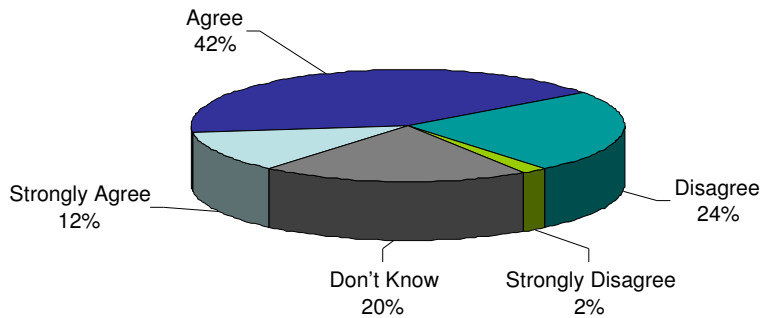
“The role of staff is to bring in new members.”

PUTTING HOPE’S SPIRITUAL GIFTS TO USE

Kairos identifies a congregation’s ability to tap into the talents of its people as fundamental for a thriving church in today’s environment. The Congregational Survey respondents considered how well Hope does at emphasizing “gift-oriented” ministry where we aide our members in identifying their gifts and help them find ways to live them out through our community.

One could look at the following graphic and conclude that perhaps we do okay on this front. After all, over half (54%) of the survey respondents are in agreement that we do this. But if you think further on it, approximately one in ten (12%) Strongly Agree that this is how Hope operates, implying that there’s ample room to improve how we go about helping members live out their spiritual gifts. Over one fourth of those surveyed (26%) actually disagree that we accomplish this, and one in five (20%) are unable to judge how we do in this regard.

**Hope emphasizes gift-oriented ministry (i.e., helps people identify their spiritual gifts and then live them out).
(n=195)**



There is a definite correlation between age and perception. The older you are, the more you perceive Hope as being “gift-oriented” in its ministry (e.g., 71% of respondents 65 years and older are in agreement, versus 37% of those 30 years and under). What implications does this have for how we engage and involve our younger members? What could we do to help our members tap into their abilities and apply them to helping Hope in its servanthood?

There is also a correlation between viewing Hope’s abilities to utilize members’ spiritual gifts positively and the degree to which one financially supports our congregation. Two out of three (65%) respondents contributing at least \$2,000 annually view Hope in a positive light. Might this suggest that the more one feels their talents, skills and abilities are being put to use, the more vested interest they have in Hope and the more inclined they are to provide Hope with financial support?

The following is a sample of what members have to say about the role of laity as it relates to tapping into our talents, skills and abilities.

“Keep gifted people here so they have an outlet for using their talents at Hope, and find in Hope a place where those talents can be nurtured and backed.”

“The laity has an essential role because the staff can’t do it all. It’s part of the personal faith journey and their role is to get involved where their talents lie and where they have the time.”

“We have a lot of underutilized people in this congregation – but engaging them requires that we give them a strong sense of purpose. There is so much competing for one’s time that the reasons to give it to Hope have to be very compelling.”

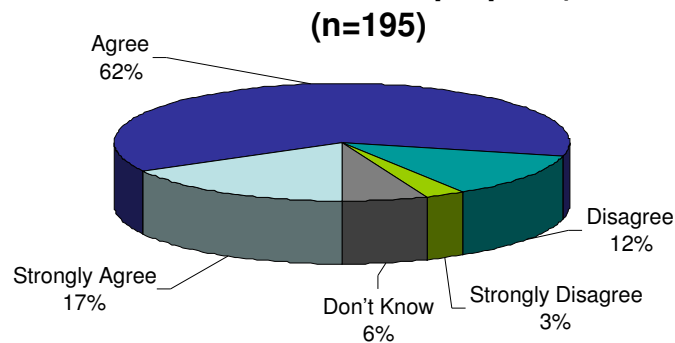
One of the recurring themes in the focus groups and one-on-one interviews regarding the reliance on laity is burnout. If we have a sizeable portion of our membership thinking Hope could do a better job of helping members apply their spiritual gifts, it would then seem that by engaging more of our members we could lessen the likelihood of over-reliance on the same individuals. The added advantage of actively involving more people is the opportunity for building stronger relationships and commitment to Hope.

“Currently, it seems about ¼ of our membership are asked to fill multiple roles within the congregation, another ¼ seem to get away with filling only one role in the church and are not asked to extend themselves; and the remaining half aren’t asked to do much at all. I don’t think it’s a coincidence that it’s folks in the bottom ¾ who end up leaving the congregation and going somewhere else – people want to know their gifts are needed.”

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND HOPE’S FUTURE MISSION

Kairos has found that congregations successfully carrying out their ministries make a deliberate effort to align their resources and infrastructure around their mission priorities. How do members perceive the effectiveness of what we have in place (i.e., a collection of commissions overseen by a Board of Commissioners, along with paid staff to support our programs and ministries)? Nearly two-thirds (62%) of the Congregational Survey respondents agree that our structure is functional, another 17% strongly agree, though nearly an equal number (15%) are in disagreement.

Hope has functional organizational structures (i.e., the overall staffing, lay and programmatic structures of the church serves its purpose).



While the general sense conveyed in the results of the Congregational Survey is that our organizational structure is functional, indication that there are opportunities for improvement

emerged in the focus groups and one-on-one interviews. Following is a sampling of observations and suggestions from members who have experienced working within the current structure:

“The lay leadership structure needs to be re-vamped, e.g., too many committees that meet too often and take too much time. Creates a drain on active congregation members and slows us down. Longer terms for President so they can take action on their ideas – one year isn’t enough time to accomplish many things. Streamline it down.”

“We spend a lot of time on governance structure, filling slots and organizational positions. We are not freeing people to be leaders. No one wants to go to the Board meeting from our commission. Commissioners don’t want to do anything on the Board. They are not excited by that. There is no perfect structure but scrapping our organizational structure would be better than what we have.”

“We should revise our board so it is more active. We could have term limits for committees so they aren’t run by the same people for so long. The lay leadership should focus on a few major projects each year, rather than so many areas, to guarantee success on those projects.”

“The current structure with Board approval to sign off on projects isn’t working. ... Use a task force model to engage members for specific, short term tasks.”

“Commissions should be nurturing. Sometimes they are just meetings with no prayer or personal sharing – just like work”.

Just what the “right” structure is for Hope at this point in our history remains to be seen and will flesh itself out as we get farther into the Mission Renewal process.

SO WHAT DO ALL THESE PIECES IMPLY FOR HOPE?

“We can define all the future priorities we want, but if we can’t clearly define who owns the follow through on those priorities for the long haul, we’ll end up right back in the confusing place we’ve been in for the last several years.”

Through the Mission Renewal data gathering process, members have made it clear that they do not wish to see Hope tightly narrow its focus in ministry. Continuing down the path of sustaining a diversity of missions in an environment where the congregation has a high expectation that the laity play a prominent role in implementing Hope’s future mission priorities creates some interesting challenges.

- What picture are we painting for ourselves in terms of what we are looking for from our clergy? The congregation does not seem to be saying that they are looking for a charismatic evangelical leader. This seems to be a significant contrast from what members were looking for in years past and even as recent as Pastor Shirley’s call. Why? What is different about us today than what the congregation valued in the past?
- Effective ministry takes a significant investment in leadership time. If the congregation expects the laity to be in the driver’s seat, where will that motivation and energy come from?
- In a culture where there is constant competition for one’s time, how do we create a climate where members have a strong desire to get actively involved, and where our organizational structure is a tool to success and less of a barrier?

- How do we tap into underutilized talent? How do we use opportunities to support the activities we engage in as a means of attracting new members?

SPECIFIC IMPLICATIONS FOR STAFFING

If Hope is going through a transition in its understanding of the role of clergy as discussed in the previous section, how do we re-imagine a staffing configuration at Hope that will better align with how we describe ourselves and with our missional objectives? While many people are very satisfied with Hope's staff members, there have long been questions about Hope's overall staffing model. Naturally, whatever staffing configuration Hope adopts has significant financial impact on the congregation's mission possibilities.

One of the questions that Kairos poses to help congregations move from good to great is whether they have the right people on the bus, an image used in Jim Collin's book, "Good to Great and the Social Sectors" -- a recommended read by Kairos for the MRTF, staff and Board of Commissioners. This is a question that some congregational members have asked as well:

"Change is slow and hard at first. It needs trust. Lay leadership turns over all the time. So we also need staff leadership and training of leaders to effect ten-year change. Do you have the right people in the bus with you, and in the right seats? Right now, the answer is 'No.'"

"We have very talented staff members but their gifts don't align sufficiently with congregational needs."

"We are greatly overstaffed, which in my mind means we shouldn't have some of the problems we're having ..."

"Perhaps we need fewer ordained staff in order to support other staff needs."

"The leadership structure – it works, but is it too big?"

While this is a challenging issue for any congregation to address, this Mission Renewal process in which we are currently engaged presents us with an opportunity to re-evaluate the staffing configuration that will best meet the needs of our members. The Congregational Report from Kairos in 2005 encouraged us to take up this challenge as we re-imagine Hope's future.

WHAT DO WE THINK ABOUT WORSHIP?

Throughout the one-on-one interviews, focus groups and in the commentary of the Congregational Survey, what goes on during worship – whether it be the music, the preaching, the service – is frequently referred to very positively when members talk about what they need most to stimulate and nurture their faith. We take great pride in our musical abilities, messages from the pulpit, and worship traditions.

As in any community, there is a spectrum of viewpoints on all of this ranging from the enthusiastic to the critical, as is reflected in the following member comments about what they need from music, preaching and worship to stimulate and nurture their faith.

Regarding Music:

“A musical community, but Hope already does an excellent job of that.”

“More diverse musical services.”

Regarding Preaching:

“Continued relevant preaching, connecting God’s Word to the relevant issues of the day.”

“Challenging preaching. A good loud-speaker system and an ability to understand the Pastor.”

Regarding Worship as a whole:

“Worship—the liturgy, music, communion. I grew up Methodist without any liturgy. The first time I was at a Lutheran church I was so impressed by the liturgy. I love the order of the church and the little things—processing in with the cross, how we do communion.”

“Provide me with a worship experience that caters to and is driven by what the individual in the pew is experiencing, rather than what those responsible for Sunday morning worship planning have a personal need to see done. We have so many positive things going in our worship, yet – in my view – there is often a disconnect between the leadership and the congregation on how much of something is enough, and what is meaningful and inspirational. The opportunity to stimulate and nurture faith through worship is undermined by timing issues, difficulty understanding what’s being said, and a reluctance to mix things up liturgically.”

Our worship tradition is seen by some of our members as one of Hope’s greatest opportunities...

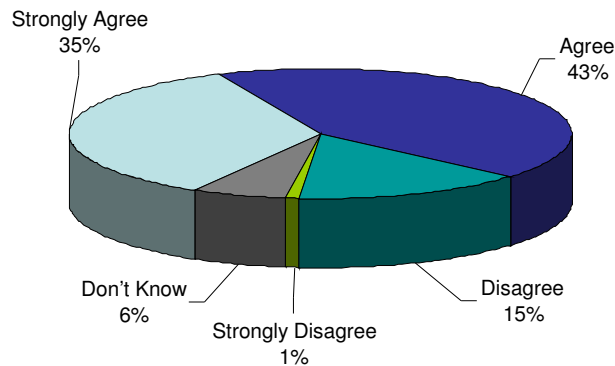
“We have a very unique identity in that we are politically and theologically progressive, yet we honor the ancient rituals and music. Even in a metro area rife with Lutheran churches, it is so hard to find a congregation that fits that description. Churches that are politically progressive seem to have moved in a contemporary direction with their worship services, avoiding traditional organ chorales and four-part singing, not offering communion every week. Churches that do offer a more musical, “high-church” worship service tend to be pretty conservative. I believe there are lots of folks who yearn for both of these experiences – who crave ritual and connection, but who question theological dogma. ULCH is the perfect place for those folks, but we need to identify and market ourselves that way.”

“Capitalize on the under-utilized talent we have within the congregation to create more interesting, stimulating experiences educationally, musically, and in the pulpit. We like to “think” – there are many exciting ways in which to take this to new levels and draw in people looking for an intellectual challenge along with a more liturgical worship experience.”

According to Kairos, an organization that has worked with Lutheran congregations as well as other mainline denomination churches across the nation over the past two decades, one of the key characteristics associated with effective, mission-oriented congregations today is an ability to consistently provide members with inspiring worship services.

We asked respondents of the Congregational Survey to convey their perceptions of Hope in this regard. As the following graphic displays, one third (35%) of the 195 members responding indicate they Strongly Agree that our worship services are inspirational; another 43% Agree.

Hope creates inspiring worship services. (n=195)



There is a sizeable portion of the congregation that is content with their Sunday morning worship experience. *However*, satisfaction around worship correlates with age. The older you are, the more likely you are to Strongly Agree that Hope’s worship services are inspiring. (See page 47 for more demographic detail.)

Aside from our members under the age of 30, where is the strongest frustration with our worship services coming from? It is coming from members with kids – particularly those whose children are between the ages of 6 to 15. One third (34%) of Congregational Survey respondents whose households have children in this age range either Disagree or Strongly Disagree that “Hope creates inspiring worship.” This has serious implications for future growth. *It critical that we understand what this means in terms of Hope’s ability draw in new members, particularly families – a group that represents a potential demographic target for this congregation.*

Thinking about the demographic segment that is 31-50 years of age (i.e., typically parents and a group that is of great importance to membership growth, resource and financial support, and Hope’s long-term sustainability), what would it take for these members to be in strong agreement that our services inspire them to come to church in a spirit of joy rather than a sense of duty?

Keeping in mind that our congregation has placed great emphasis on the importance of growing our membership base (i.e., 90% agree this is a priority for our future), it is important to hear and understand the voices within our congregation that are not being spiritually fed by what goes on

from week to week in Sunday morning worship. One member's comment reflects this unmet need: *"Vary the worship experience, the style and broaden the appeal."* How, then, do we go about incorporating the wants and needs of this segment of our membership in our worship planning?

What changes must we make to provide them with a more uplifting Sunday morning worship experience? What strengths do we need to leverage? What weaknesses do we need to shore up? How do we honor our rich Lutheran heritage and traditions, and infuse into our worship services a renewed energy that leaves the majority of worshippers in all demographic segments feeling more inspired as they head into their week?

WHAT DO WE THINK ABOUT YOUTH, CHILDREN'S AND FAMILY MINISTRY?

When presented with a spectrum of mission possibilities in the Congregational Survey, nine in ten respondents agree that *Youth, Children's* and/or *Family* ministries should be a priority for Hope. Members were then asked to narrow their preferences down to two priorities in ministry. These ministries remain top priorities for 44% of those surveyed.

As might be expected, parents with children at home are the most inclined to identify one or more of these ministries among their top two preferences (56% of households with children at home). Although the percentage is lower, there is a fair amount of support for these ministries as a priority among members who do not have children at home (41%). It is even more intriguing that a good many seniors (i.e., those 65 years and older) also place priority on these ministries (39%), particularly where *Family* ministry is concerned (24%). See page 18 for specific comparisons.

Although the youth are less frequently mentioned by Congregational Survey respondents and one-on-one interviewees when asked what they believe to be Hope's greatest opportunity, they emerge as the most frequently mentioned opportunity in focus groups. The following comments express member thoughts about our young people and our ministry to them.

"Youth is the future—include us! Our faith is still developing."

"I was worried about losing kids, but that has changed. Yet, Audrey will be gone. So it becomes a staffing issue, depending on money. That's always the way here: turnover in youth ministry."

"Making it dynamic again. I envision a church with programs for youth they can't wait to get to."

"The congregation has been very accepting of youth – mohawks and all. But we do lack in intermingling of youth and seniors. Seniors don't know how to react to the youth and the youth don't understand aging and its complications. We need more interaction. Seniors give so much to the youth here, especially financially. But there is little giving the other way around."

Thinking about this in the broader context of Hope and its mission priorities, what are the implications of this? If we are to take the congregation's desire for membership growth seriously, what do we need to be offering to better meet the needs of our young people and their families? What actions can we take that will be attractive to prospective members with families? What does Youth Ministry mean in a congregation of so few youth?

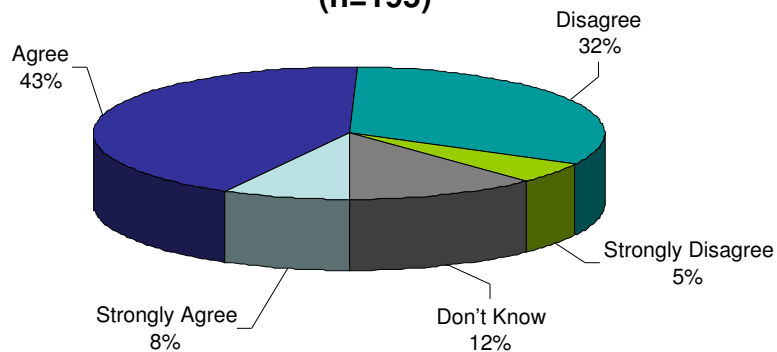
WHAT DO WE THINK ABOUT PERSONAL SPIRITUAL NURTURING?

FOSTERING PASSIONATE SPIRITUALITY

Kairos identifies a congregation's ability to infuse passion into the hearts and minds of its members as a key factor in cultivating an environment that people are drawn to. In the Congregational Survey, we asked members to evaluate how well Hope does at fostering "passionate spirituality." Less than one in ten members surveyed (8%) Strongly Agree that we inspire a faith that is lived out with commitment, fire and enthusiasm. In fact, over a third (37%) Disagree or Strongly Disagree that we accomplish this. As the graphic below illustrates, that leaves a sizeable portion of the congregation with a rather lukewarm perspective on how well we do this.

Hope fosters passionate spirituality (i.e., a faith that is lived out with commitment, fire and enthusiasm).

(n=195)



Might these results be an indication of the inertia that some members expressed feeling during the process of gathering feedback? Does it enlighten our understanding of why some have a sense that somewhere along the way we've "lost our groove?"

"We're tired, and tired of being tired."

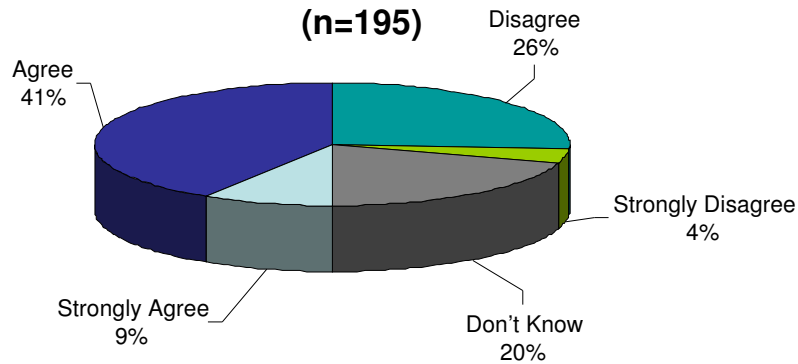
"We never do anything outrageous any more."

"We need a sense of excitement. We don't get it from anywhere now."

CULTIVATING COMMUNITY AND SPIRITUAL INTERACTION

Kairos has found that churches with great zeal around their ministries leverage the power of small groups to build community and spiritually feed people. Here again, fewer than one in ten members feel strongly that we do this well at Hope (9%). We have a large number in some agreement (41%), but nearly one third (30%) are in disagreement and one out of five (20%) simply can't say. As the graphic on the following page suggests, we have a great opportunity to broaden our faith experience through interaction with others.

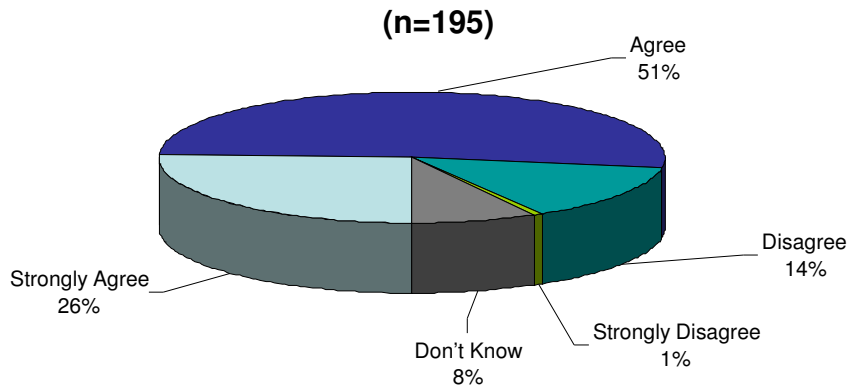
Hope cultivates holistic small groups (i.e., places where individuals can find community and intensive spiritual interaction).



FOSTERING LOVING RELATIONSHIPS

Another attribute Kairos points to as a sign of effective, mission-oriented congregations is their ability to foster loving relationships that go beyond the worship experience on Sunday morning. One-fourth (26%) of the Congregational Survey respondents feel strongly that Hope accomplishes this and half (51%) have a favorable perspective, while 15% are in disagreement and approximately one in ten (8%) can't say.

Hope fosters loving relationships (i.e., caring, laughter, time spent outside of Sunday morning).



It is interesting to note that our younger members (those 30 and younger) are the most inclined to *strongly* agree that Hope accomplishes this (50% compared to 21-23% for members in older age segments). Why? What are these young people experiencing that fosters this sense of positive relationship to others? Equally as interesting is the fact that if one is critical of Hope in this regard, odds are high that they are in the 31-50 age bracket (50% of the disagreement responses come from this age group), or have children in their household (43% of the disagreement responses are from households with kids) – especially so if one has children five and under (54% of members with small kids disagree that they experience Hope in this way).

WHAT DO THESE ATTRIBUTES MEAN FOR HOPE?

If we agree that fostering a passionate spirituality, cultivating intense spiritual interaction, and nurturing loving relationships is important to the faith development of our members and those who have yet to discover Hope, what do we need to be doing differently? How can we better meet the needs of our members in this way?

The MRTF asked members what they view as the necessities for stimulating and nurturing their faith. Whether in the one-on-one interviews, focus groups or the Congregational Survey, members look to the same things: relationships within the community, relevant preaching, meaningful worship, and intellectual challenge.

These are all inwardly-focused activities. What implications does this have for our priorities in ministry? How can we create and leverage opportunities that will foster passionate spirituality and facilitate rich community experiences, while living out our call to serve others? Where does the Gospel enter into our mission equation?

Many members believe that by taking better care of ourselves, we can be more effective in ministering to the needs of others:

“We need to do a combination of taking care of people here to help them thrive, and of going out beyond Hope, reaching out, creating a destination church that people will want to come to because of the nurturing here and what people are doing here.”

“We need devotions, prayer. We do, then pray. We need to get more into prayer and spirituality first. We are all constantly doing, caught in process and business when we need to pause for reflection.”

“Mission is to come together to nurture faith. Secular people can also do food shelves, social justice, homeless ministry, etc. without being part of a church. We need to increase our faith to enable giving to others.”

Some members see a focus on nurturing ourselves as an antidote to burning members out:

“People get burned out. They don’t get spiritual needs met.”

“We need to pay attention to exhausting leaders, recognizing their needs and nurturing them. We haven’t done that well. The church doesn’t use leadership or utilize talent as it could. Without these leaders, we wouldn’t be here. We use people up rather than nurturing leadership, especially people with a huge capacity for leadership.”

So if relationships within the community, relevant preaching, meaningful worship, and intellectual challenge are all integral to feeding and nurturing the spirit, what are members specifically looking for within each of these arenas?

- **Relationships / Community:** Members identified a variety of ways in which this is experienced.
 - ◆ Small groups.
 - ◆ Bible Studies.
 - ◆ Working together on special service projects.
 - ◆ Social get-togethers where they can engage with others more informally.
 - ◆ Communal activities during worship (e.g., passing of the peace).

Ultimately, members who value relationship and community building are looking for avenues where they can more intimately get to know others and others can get to know them.

“Genuine community. I need people who are interested in getting to know who I am, so that I can share where I’m at with my faith.”

“Looking around the world and saying I can’t change everything. But I have some responsibility to see that what’s wrong with the world needs to be addressed. That’s important to my faith, but I don’t have the tools to address these things by myself. For myself, and my faith, I need to be with other people who are also struggling with these issues – who choose adventure over safety, to see through other people’s perspectives, etc.”

- **Relevant Preaching:** To stimulate and nurture their faith, members look to the pulpit for sermons that are biblically based, that connect God’s Word to the relevant issues of the day, force them to think hard about issues and challenge them to “do the right thing.”

“Excellent preaching ... People aren’t going to come to church if they don’t hear something stirring them from the pulpit. Preaching is the first place to connect with people. It’s ground zero. Growth must start with good preaching.”

“Sermons that incorporate basic reminders and examples of how the Bible and God bring people through busy lives, good and bad times and faith journeys. --- The very practical and basic messages of the Bible.”

“Powerful sermons and strong cohesive messages each Sunday.”

“Continue strong sermons. Emphasize more the personal-reading of scripture. Help us do this on Sunday mornings -- look at scripture together -- Bibles in the pews?”

To accomplish this, not everyone expects or desires that our staff clergy are the ones in the pulpit every Sunday:

“Rely on the wealth of talented volunteers as substitute preachers.”

“I would like to see more people in the pulpit who are not ordained ... We lose some of the energy and spirit of faith when we don’t hear from non-ordained members.”

Preaching is of particular importance to members in the 31-50 age range (28% of this segment), those with children under the age of 15 (33%), and those contributing over \$4,000 annually to Hope (30%).

- **Meaningful Worship:** Members describe a variety of aspects related to the worship experience when thinking about what they need to stimulate and nurture their faith. Following is a sampling of what people look for in their Sunday morning worship experience.

“Meaningful worship experiences. Sometimes Sunday morning is the only time I have when I’m at Hope to actually pray.”

“The setting (i.e., the sanctuary) and the music.”

“Worship service with scripture involved.”

“Richness in liturgy with the classic elements of music. An intimate connectedness as the body of Christ amid the worship experience. Awesome music.”

As with preaching, those members most inclined to identify worship as a key component in what they need to nurture their faith are those in the 31-50 age bracket (25% of this segment) and our big givers (22% of those contributing over \$4,000 annually). It is interesting to note that for those members with kids *over* the age of 10, worship does not surface as frequently as it does for those parents with kids 10 and *under* (14% vs. 28%, respectively). This seems to correlate with the frustration expressed by parents through their inclination to be more critical of Hope's performance in creating inspiring worship services. It would stand to reason that if you have small children and you are not experiencing worship that is conducive to addressing young children's needs, you may be more inclined to identify meaningful worship as something you currently need.

- **Intellectual Challenge:** Whether members provided feedback through one-on-one interviews, focus groups or the Congregational Survey, the theme of needing intellectual stimulation to nurture one's faith was common. Comments from members express a great need for more in this regard, which can lead to opportunity in Hope's future ministry.

"Provide avenues for me to delve into ideas and contemporary issues of faith. Foster interaction with other members in small group settings and assist me in my understanding of what it means to be Christian, to be Lutheran. Challenge my thinking by encouraging open dialogue on divergent perspectives of pertinent issues."

"The Lenten Bible Study was the first time I experienced intellectual, historical Bible study. There isn't enough opportunity for that here. It was too short. I wish we had more."

"Go beyond tradition into discussions of faith. Combine civil discourse and faith."

"I was drawn to ULCH because of the open inquisitive challenging topics."

"I love the adult forums – the opportunities for education and study, but not necessarily Bible study."

"Interactive dialogue with others about faith, Christianity in the context of current issues, meaty, thought-provoking Bible study."

Who among our membership is most inclined to identify intellectual challenge as a key ingredient in stimulating their faith? Again, it is those 31-50 in age (23% of this segment), those with children – especially under the age of 10 (31%), and those who are our biggest contributors (22% of those contributing \$4,000 or more annually).

Stepping back and taking all of this into consideration – how well Hope is currently perceived as fostering passionate spirituality and cultivating holistic small groups, as well as what members say they need to stimulate and nurture their faith – there are some interesting questions that may be worth exploring. For instance, is it a consequence of a consumer society that churches find they must make a deliberate effort to gratify members' desires, tending closely to their needs? Or is it through nurturing and holding each other up that we create the conditions for great things to happen within our community and, ultimately, well beyond?

Mainline churches have often presumed that parishioners will attend services out of institutional loyalty. But shifting loyalties have led to declining attendance in recent decades. The mega-churches, whether or not one agrees with their theology, have figured out how to feed the spiritual needs that so many church and unchurched crave.

The questions for us then... Why do our members come to Hope now? What spiritual needs can we meet if we put our hearts and minds to it? What will entice new people to enter our doors and come back for more? What nourishment can we provide to our current members that can fuel living the Gospel out in the broader world we live in?

“As we look to the future, consider that people are wanting deep spiritual connection in a world that changes so rapidly.”

“Most of my friends do not go to church. Some of us would go come hell or high water because that’s the way we were raised. But today we need to ‘hook’ people.”

WHAT DO WE THINK ABOUT EDUCATION?

When members in the Congregational Survey were given a list of specific missions for possible focus at Hope, nearly all respondents (96%) were in agreement that Education should be a high priority. However, when then pressed to narrow the focus down to their top two preferences in ministry, Education (17%) dropped in rank behind *Worship* and *Youth* Ministries.

While the percentage of members identifying Education as one of their top two priority preferences is relatively small, support for it can be found within all demographic segments of the congregation – particularly among members in the 31-50 age range.

Although the feedback instruments used in Mission Renewal data gathering (i.e., the survey, focus groups and one-on-one interviews) were not specifically designed to delve deeply into members' perception of this topic, thoughts on Education at Hope emerged in comments expressed throughout the feedback process.

Some members see this as an area that distinguishes Hope:

"I remember from my leadership years how impressed I was by the forums and opportunities here for education and moral discourse, etc. We have unique things to offer in the greater community."

"The congregation has strong intellectual ties to the university and critical thinking/education. This is crucial to Hope's mission."

"We have to be a place for all generations. Learning, challenge, education."

Others offered suggestions for meeting member needs through education:

"I need a place to hear the Word – to be challenged, to learn something."

"Strengthen Christian education for everyone."

"Provide more opportunities for substantive adult education (i.e., more in-depth than typical published Bible studies)."

"Education is a central foundation for social justice, music and arts ministry. Consider Education at all levels –children, youth, family, University, PEASE."

How does our approach to Education at Hope currently meet the needs of members? Given members' desire for growth and the expressed desire for intellectual challenge, where does Education play a role in our strategies for reaching out to others?

WHAT DO WE THINK ABOUT SOCIAL JUSTICE?

Concern for Social Justice is a distinguished part of Hope's legacy. Our heritage on this front has been a key reason many members and staff have been drawn to our congregation over the past several decades.

But current congregational perceptions regarding Social Justice as part of our ministry today are complex. As members indicated through the Mission Renewal data gathering process, being a congregation concerned with Social Justice was unique twenty years ago. Now, it isn't. There are many Twin Cities congregations where Social Justice concerns are lifted up. Moreover, there are a plethora of opportunities and organizations for people (both Christian and non-Christian) to get involved with Social Justice issues outside of church. What implications does this have for our growth?

"In the past we were a voice in the community locally and nationally. It is an important voice to come both from the pulpit and the pew. It is important as a congregation to address justice issues in the context of our lives."

Some members, however, believe that Social Justice no longer has the power to attract new members, as in the past:

"Social justice is quieter here now. I don't see social justice as a growth driver now."

"Social justice is no longer a growth driver. Hope as a social justice congregation was unique twenty years ago. Today people can find that in many churches and altogether without church. Recent new members do not name it as a key attraction."

Other members see possibilities in it as a means of differentiating us still today:

"I've tried to go to other congregations and feel like I'm committing adultery when I do! I think it's important for congregations to try to bridge the cultural divide we're experiencing in the United States, to speak about justice as a common purpose and a desire in the heart of God. I hope that congregations like that continue to exist – it's not clear to me that now there are a lot of them like that. Maybe about a dozen in the Twin Cities – and Hope is one of them."

Consider some findings that emerged from the Mission Renewal data gathering efforts:

- When presented with a spectrum of mission possibilities for Hope in the Congregational Survey, 35% of our members surveyed Strongly Agree that Social Justice should be a high priority for Hope. When asked to narrow the focus and identify their top two preferences in ministry, 9% of the 195 members surveyed identified Social Justice as their number one priority; 16% selected it as one of their top two.
- The segments of our congregation most inclined to identify Social Justice as one of their top two preferences for a priority in Hope's ministry are parents with kids at home (26% of this segment) and those who have joined Hope in the last 10 years (29%).
- In focus group and one-on-one interview comments, Social Justice concerns are significantly outweighed by our "relationships to each other", "worship", "music"

and “preaching” as the things we look for in a church to meet our faith needs and to personally stimulate and nurture us spiritually.

- There are differing ideas as to what Social Justice means and as to which Social Justice issues should take priority.

These findings pose some interesting questions as we try to interpret the implications of this for our future ministry. If Social Justice is a compelling priority for one out of ten members, what does it mean for growth? What does it mean for dialogue? For programming? For where staff and leadership energy is directed?

Hope has a rare gift in that, while generally perceived as a progressive, even liberal church, there are also conservative members here – a diversity mirroring the early church.

“There are people at Hope from all across the spectrum on social justice issues.”

“We need to recognize that there are those who are conservative in this congregation and that we could lose them.”

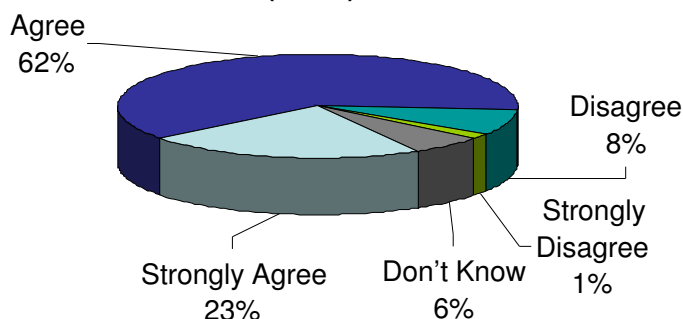
“We need to be careful about alienating people and driving them away from Hope over social justice positions.”

How can this diversity in perspective be honored, preserved, and utilized as we think about where we take our ministry?

WHAT DO WE THINK ABOUT OUTREACH?

One sign of a healthy congregation, according to the characteristics defined by Kairos, is the intentionality of spreading the Gospel to Christians and non-Christians alike. Congregational Survey respondents considered how well Hope does in this regard. Nearly one in four (23%) strongly agree that we do this well, another 62% have a favorable perception, leaving under one in ten (9%) in disagreement, and 6% unable to gauge.

Hope addresses sharing the Gospel in ways that meet the needs of Christians and non-Christians (i.e., hosting Families Moving Forward, sponsoring or hosting open lectures on topics concerning society, participating in public forums, etc.).
(n=195)



Given the low level of disagreement (9%), these results are interesting in the context of where *Outreach* to the local community and beyond stacks up in members' priorities for missional focus. It takes a backseat to *Worship, Youth/Children's/Family, Personal Spiritual Nurturing, Education* and *Social Justice* ministries.

When members were given the opportunity to identify their top two preferences for where Hope should prioritize its ministry efforts, approximately one third (36%) of the Congregational Survey respondents specified some sort of outreach ministry (i.e., the community, University students in particular, the GLBT population, Singles, Seniors, or areas beyond our immediate locale). However, as might be expected in a congregation valuing its diversity in ministry efforts, there is no consensus around which particular ministry would be a priority. (See page 49 for more details.)

As mentioned previously in this report, when one looks at those things on which Hope members place emphasis of priority, they tend to be things focused on “inreach” – worship, youth programs, education, personal spirituality – rather than evangelistic activities aimed at discipleship external to us. Our collective focus is more on what one needs when one comes to Hope and less on what one expects of Hope in helping to live out a Christian faith in servanthood. Why might this be? We have many members actively involved in all kinds of organizations that service broader communities. As a result, do we have a lower expectation of Hope to provide outreach and service opportunities? Or, as some members have alluded, is there perhaps a spiritual void first needing to be filled within our own membership community before we can envision putting energy into outreach beyond?

The MRTF explored members' thoughts about the role Hope should play in its surrounding community and beyond. The following sections discuss this in more detail.

OUTREACH TO THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITY

In the focus groups and one-on-one interviews, members were asked how important it was to them that Hope plays a role in the surrounding community. While members by and large tend to view outreach to the community as important, some expressed a desire to see us first focusing on the needs of our own members:

“It is important, but I am concerned that with our dwindling membership we are all spread too thin – some choices have to be made.”

“First priority is to Hope and its members – the sheep in our own flock.”

Other voices remind us of our responsibility to the broader church.

“Very important – we are not here to simply dwell on our own needs. Rather, we need to harness our gifts and passions as a congregation to benefit of those who can be enriched by what we have to offer.”

“This is very important, obviously, as it’s the mission of the church universal, not just ULCH. We don’t exist to nurture ourselves, though this congregation sometimes takes that attitude. We shy away from outreach and evangelism because it makes us uncomfortable, rather than acknowledging that evangelism is exactly what Jesus calls us all to do. We want our worship service to speak to what we need and have the music we love (and I’m as guilty of that as anyone), but it’s not enough for us to sit in church and pat ourselves on the back for having found a church community we love and being active members of it. We need to make ourselves visible, as a beacon to those congregations and people like us, and as a witness to those unlike us.”

The majority of focus group participants and interviewees indicated that there is some level of want, need or desire to give the local community our attention, although it is a matter of refining just what that would look like. In the words of one member:

“We need to ask ourselves what is our mission in this location. Is the mission determined by the location in the city? If so we are not doing a good job of it.”

The MRTF took a look at what members had to say about the various areas of local outreach.

- **Outreach to the Neighborhood:** There’s a general sense that we could be more deliberate about engaging the local community in some fashion, as is reflected in the various ideas suggested by members in this feedback gathering process.

“I live in the surrounding community. Other than the Rummage Sale, I don’t think all strive to reach out to the neighborhood and students. I think we should serve them by providing programs which will draw people in.”

“We are not reaching the ‘walk-by’ community very effectively.”

“We need to reach out to the new apartment community.”

“Hope can be a place that is open to the neighborhood and we should or could be a place that people want to come to because of programs, music, etc. There’s a huge outreach opportunity to people coming into condos near downtown.”

“Hope has a wealth of talent, skill and compassion that are trapped in a “theological ghetto” where no one in the neighborhood realizes what great potential exists within our walls.”

Some members see Hope’s “Room for Fresh Creations” remodeling project as a step toward enabling us to better serve the neighborhood community:

“Our relationship to the community was a big factor in planning Room For Fresh Creations. We saw opportunities based on talking with neighbors.”

“In terms of neighborhood, we have played a role in the past but haven’t done as much as we could in recent times. It is important to reach out but difficult to reach out because of the “non” neighborhood feel. I’m glad that we have changed the church building so that the biggest windows in the church no longer look into the courtyard, but look out into the neighboring community.”

While not a prominently voiced perspective, some members do not see outreach to the neighborhood as a necessity:

“Neighborhood involvement is not important at all, honestly, not a critical part of our mission. We don’t really engage the community. We don’t send representatives to groups using Hope. We never serve ice cream at the U., encouraging students during finals or whatever.”

“It’s less important because things are changing in immediate community. It’s no longer like a family but we need to be aware of what is happening to the demographics. [The neighborhood] is important if we can figure out how to tap into it.”

- **Outreach to the U of M Community:** Many members see our proximity to the University of Minnesota campus as an outreach opportunity. In the Congregational Survey, the U of M and its students were the second most widely mentioned suggestion (following “us/the resources within our membership”) when asked what members see as Hope’s greatest opportunity (17%). The University and its students were also frequently mentioned by focus group participants and one-on-one interviewees as they pondered the importance of Hope’s role in the surrounding community. The following comments reflect perspectives expressed through all channels of gathering feedback:

“Consider the reason the church was built in the first place—as a mission/ministry to the University students.”

“The Lutheran Student Center took over part of this function, but they are downsizing. If we don’t work with the U, we are failing our original mission. We could connect with the U students with (1) concerts or a bake sale in the mall, (2) put an ad in the daily for fellowship meals, (3) provide “Grandmas for Students” offering comforts of home, (4) invite student organizations to meet in the church.”

“We reflect the University community. We are in a period of time where church going isn’t a part of what typical college kids do. ULCH is not in its glory days any more where large numbers of students come each Sunday. But, the style of worship (which is what they may be familiar with from their own hometown) combined with liberal issues thinking can draw the student population and be inclusive of all generations.”

“The University is a natural spot to recruit like-minded people.”

“With our location to the University, we need a strong ministry to this group.”

However, some members express a more pragmatic view when it comes to the student population, suggesting that the undergraduates may not be the ideal area of focus for our outreach priorities:

“I don’t see our future in welcoming undergraduates. We should welcome all. We shouldn’t focus on 18 to 22 year olds. We should identify ourselves more as a place of life-long learning.”

“Outreach to young people at the University, especially graduate students.”

“The crass reality is that students are not going to pay for the church. We need “next-step” people.”

“Many Hope people were graduate students when they came here. Hope is more a place for graduates.”

“[Outreach to students is] important, but should not overshadow other priorities. I do not see this as a top priority. Undergrads should not be the target of focused efforts, but rather grad students. I see grad students as a niche market. I don’t think Hope is staffed to make undergrad outreach a viable mission priority.”

- **Outreach to Other Niche Ministries (GLBT Community, Singles, Seniors):** When thinking about the role Hope could or should play in the surrounding community, very little voice in the focus groups or one-on-one interviews was given to the GLBT, Singles and Seniors ministries. This seems to parallel the Congregational Survey results in which these areas of outreach were of preferred priority for a select few of our members, and rarely did any mention of them surface in member comments.

While the percentage of members identifying any one of these ministries as a priority preference is small, support for them is found within all demographic segments of the congregation. It is interesting to note, for instance, that even seniors themselves – a group represented by more than 40 members age 65 and over in the Congregational Survey – tended not to identify Seniors Ministry as a focus in mission priority, choosing instead to put priorities elsewhere.

OUTREACH BEYOND OUR COMMUNITY

In focus groups and one-on-one interviews, the MRTF also probed into members’ perceptions of the future role Hope should play in ministering to the needs *beyond* the surrounding community. For some members, being involved globally appears to be less important than being involved locally:

“It is important but not as important as being involved locally. There are local churches in those other areas. Each church needs to make a local focus. Some global focus is needed but is not the primary mission. The possible exception would be places that don’t have any kind of ministry.”

“It’s important that we see the broader Church/other denominations. For instance, mission trips to Africa or other places can be life-changing for those who go. These kinds of activities help people find meaning in their lives. But now Hope seems to be unbalanced—we place more emphasis on this than on our surrounding community. To get back in balance we should focus more on the surrounding community.”

But for most members who reflected on this, outreach beyond our immediate surroundings is of importance, although the reasons tend to vary.

Global outreach is seen as a mechanism for heightening awareness and preventing us from a myopic view of the world:

“It’s important to Hope’s value of diversity. Hope should remain aware of world issues, and provide service opportunities to Hope members on these matters.”

“This would energize and stimulate the congregation, so we would not focus on just our own needs, but gain a wider perspective. A mission-minded congregation grows, sees the needs of others better. The Malawi trip is a good experience/investment. It’s a good example for the congregation to see beyond Hope, beyond the U.S.”

“As Americans we need the reminder of how good we have it, and in contrast how other countries need our help in tangible ways. Helping people become self sufficient through many different ways – I loved the thing Don Hauge did with his class...”

In the context of the broader community – that which is outside of our immediate neighborhood – the notion of not overlooking urban needs was also frequently mentioned:

“It was part of my initial draw to Hope. I like our support of city and state wide groups, like the ISALAH Project. I value our opportunities to reach out to others in need, like Families Moving Forward.”

“There are also so many urban poverty issues.”

“I’d also like to see ULCH get involved with North Minneapolis – not necessarily organizing, but participating to increase awareness – like at vigils for homicide victims.”

For some members, our involvement in ministering to the needs beyond our immediate community must reflect our responsibility to the larger church:

“We have a responsibility to the larger church, other people globally and to keep continuing our support for the things we do already (i.e., Loaves & Fishes), to be an agitator in the larger church community.”

“Hope’s congregation comes from so far away. We need to be a strong force in synod issues and governance. Hope has always played this role of advocacy. We can’t live our religion in a closet.”

As reflected in the varying perspectives here, we do not have clarity on what our role should be when it comes to outreach. There is a diversity of opinion regarding this. What implications does this have for growth? What level of commitment are members willing to give in this regard? Where does the Gospel enter into our mission priorities?

HOW DO WE SEE OURSELVES?

OUR PERCEPTIONS OF HOPE AS A MISSION-ORIENTED CONGREGATION

In the early stages of this Mission Renewal planning process, Kairos led Hope’s staff, Board of Commissioners and Task Force members through a Mission-Vision-Values workshop. Based on Kairos’ experience in working with congregations and faith-based institutions across the nation, information was shared on the characteristics or qualities commonly found in effective, growing, mission-oriented churches of today. The Mission Renewal Task Force incorporated these qualities into the Congregational Survey to gauge how our members see Hope in living out these traits.

Total Congregational Survey Respondents*					
N = 195					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Hope builds empowering leadership (i.e., leadership that is not centered around one individual; leaders help build up other leaders – growing new generations of leaders).	20%	56%	13%	0%	11%
Hope emphasizes gift-oriented ministry (i.e., helps people identify their spiritual gifts and then live them out).	12%	42%	24%	2%	20%
Hope fosters passionate spirituality (i.e., a faith that is lived out with commitment, fire and enthusiasm).	8%	42%	32%	5%	12%
Hope has functional organizational structures (i.e., the overall staffing, lay and programmatic structures of the church serves its purpose).	17%	62%	12%	3%	6%
Hope creates inspiring worship services (i.e., services that inspire people to come to church in a spirit of joy rather than duty).	35%	43%	15%	1%	6%
Hope cultivates holistic small groups (i.e., places where individuals can find community and intensive spiritual interaction).	9%	41%	26%	4%	20%
Hope addresses sharing the gospel in ways that meet the needs of Christians and non-Christians (i.e., hosting Families Moving Forward, sponsoring or hosting open lectures on topics concerning society, participating in public forums, etc.).	23%	62%	8%	1%	6%
Hope fosters loving relationships (i.e., caring, laughter, time spent together outside of Sunday morning).	26%	52%	14%	1%	8%

** Note: Percentages may not total precisely to 100% due to rounding.*

Not more than a third of the 195 members surveyed see Hope as excelling in any one of these areas. And for some traits (e.g., our emphasis on gift-oriented ministry, our cultivation of holistic

small groups), one out of five members find themselves unable to evaluate how we stack up. If one agrees that the qualities evaluated are important to the effectiveness of Hope's orientation in mission, then one can conclude that there is ample room for improvement across all of these characteristics.

Taking a closer look at each of the mission-oriented qualities, we uncover some interesting observations which, of course, lead to further questions about how to interpret the results and what implications they have for the actions we will take in the future.

➤ **Hope builds empowering leadership** (i.e., leadership that is not centered around one individual; leaders help build up other leaders – growing new generations of leaders).

- ♦ Those 51-64 in age have the strongest sense that Hope builds empowering leadership (31% of this segment Strongly Agree versus 15-23% in other age categories). Is this reflecting that many in this age group would have had or are currently in lay leadership roles?
- ♦ If you have children at home, you are significantly more inclined to view Hope negatively on this quality than you are if your household has no children. Thinking about this in the context of other things we've learned about members with families, does this indicate how we might approach leadership development differently?

➤ **Hope emphasizes gift-oriented ministry** (i.e., helps people identify their spiritual gifts and then live them out).

- ♦ The older you are, the more inclined you are to have a favorable view of how Hope helps members live out their gifts. Consider the following percentages of members who Agree or Strongly Agree that we emphasize a gift-oriented ministry:

30 years or under	37%
31-50 years	51%
51-64 years	58%
65+ years	71%

- ♦ There's a big difference in perception between those who have children at home (41% Agree or Strongly Agree) and those who do not (61% Agree or Strongly Agree). Why would this be? Given that *Youth, Children's and Family Ministry* is identified as one of members' biggest areas of priority, does this have implications for how we help members with families live out their spiritual gifts?
- ♦ The higher the income, the *less* you experience Hope this way.
- ♦ The more you financially support Hope, the *more* you experience Hope as a place that uses your spiritual gifts. This notion is not unique to us. However, **for the vibrancy and financial well-being of our congregation, this understanding has fundamental implications for how we engage people in our ministry.** Presuming there is a desire to inspire greater generosity in members' financial contributions to Hope, what does this suggest about how we put more of their gifts to use?

➤ **Hope fosters passionate spirituality** (i.e., a faith that is lived out with commitment, fire and enthusiasm).

- ♦ The higher the income, the *less* you see Hope as fostering this.
- ♦ Over half (52%) of our biggest financial contributors – those giving \$4,000 or more annually – actually *disagree* that we do this. The more you give, the less you experience Hope as fostering passionate spirituality, as is evidenced by the percentage of

Congregational Survey respondents within each annual household giving segment indicating they Disagree or Strongly Disagree that we live this out:

Less than \$1,000	18%
\$1,000-2,000	36%
\$2,000-4,000	42%
\$4,000+	52%

This finding is reinforced when we look at the fact that we have 10 members of the 195 surveyed who *Strongly* Disagree that Hope fosters passionate spirituality and 50% of them represent the top giving group. What implications does this have for how we attend to the spiritual needs of our members?

- ♦ Two out of three members age 30 and under (67%) and those age 65 and over (60%) Agree or Strongly Agree that Hope is a place that fosters passionate spirituality. Why are these members so much more positive in their perceptions than members between the age of 31-64 (43%)?
- ♦ Why is it that the older you are, the less inclined you are to answer this question? Nearly one in four members over the age of 65 had no response (24%), which is unusually high and significantly different than the other age segments.

➤ **Hope has functional organizational structures** (i.e., the overall staffing, lay and programmatic structures of the church serves its purpose).

- ♦ Those in the 31-64 age range are most critical of our structure. Why?
- ♦ As we've seen in the response by members to other qualities of a mission-oriented congregation, those on the upper end of the income and financial contribution brackets are the most inclined to view Hope's functional structure negatively. Roughly, one third of individuals in these segments Disagree or Strongly Disagree that our organizational structure meets our functional needs.

➤ **Hope creates inspiring worship services** (i.e., services that inspire people to come to church in a spirit of joy rather than duty).

- ♦ The older you are, the more inclined you are to view Hope's worship positively, as is reflected in the percentage of members by age category in *strong* agreement with this statement. Or, conversely, the younger you are, the more inclined you are to have frustration with your worship experience:

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Disagree / Strongly Disagree</u>
30 years or under	23%	27%
31-50 years	36%	13%
51-64 years	44%	17%
65+ years	43%	2%

Can we speculate that these numbers reflect a generational difference between those who grew up in the liturgical world of the ALC or LCA and those representing a younger generation for whom this experience is not as familiar or as compelling?

One member articulated the generational challenge that we face in this regard:

"The generation behind us is unchurched. How can we reach and teach them church language and practices... how to do church? We have an opportunity to try."

Whatever the reasons, this has significant implications for growth. Essentially, the results of this data are telling us that no matter which age range of our congregation we look at, we are leaving over half of those within these segments hungry for something beyond what they are currently receiving. What does this mean for worship planning that will draw in people who don't grow up in the Lutheran tradition?

- ♦ Looking at this through a different lens, one third (34%) of the members with kids from ages 6-15 Disagree or Strongly Disagree that our services are inspiring. What would it take to convert these ratings of disagreement to that of agreement with this statement?
- ♦ The lower your annual household income, the more inclined you are to Strongly Agree that our worship is inspiring; conversely, the higher your income, the more likely you are to Disagree or Strongly Disagree that your worship experience is inspiring.
- ♦ Among the financial giving segments analyzed, our biggest contributors (\$4,000+ annually) are the most inclined to Strongly Agree that Hope creates inspiring worship services (39%). It is interesting to note that this same group – when compared to members in lower levels of financial giving – is also the most inclined to Disagree or Strongly Disagree (19%).

In all of these demographic categories, we have a good many members finding their Sunday morning experience to be okay (i.e., “Agree” on a one-to-four scale that “Hope creates inspiring worship services”). Given the overwhelming desire on the part of the congregation to grow in numbers, can we be satisfied with this? *Should* we be satisfied with this?

➤ **Hope cultivates holistic small groups** (i.e., places where individuals can find community and intensive spiritual interaction).

- ♦ Our older members – those over the age of 65 – tended not to answer this question (41%). This is surprising given the fact that our seniors have been around the longest, have been most engaged in various committees and circles over the decades, and are the most inclined to associate attributes of interpersonal relationships with Hope. More than likely, the meaning of the statement lacked the clarity needed for this age group to accurately evaluate Hope's performance on this front.
- ♦ The *strongest* agreement that we accomplish this comes from those under 30. Why? What is it about their experience at Hope that cultivates a stronger favorable perception?
- ♦ Those in the 31-64 age range are the most critical of Hope in this regard. Over one third do not see us as cultivating small groups (37% Disagree or Strongly Disagree). This is the same segment that is particularly critical of our ability to foster passionate spirituality.
- ♦ The more you financially contribute to Hope, the more inclined you are to Disagree or Strongly Disagree that we cultivate small groups to strengthen community and engage in intensive spiritual interaction. This is reflected by the percentage of members in the various giving segments that Disagree or Strongly Disagree with this statement:

Less than \$1,000	16%
\$1,000-2,000	26%
\$2,000-4,000	29%
\$4,000+	44%

“Small groups” represent the interconnectedness that many people desire – even crave – in a spiritual community. Beyond the intimacy of relating to others, small groups are avenues for studying God's Word, for educating, for challenging one's thinking, for lifting up in prayer those

things that are near and dear to us in our daily lives, for accomplishing in service to others what one individual alone can not. How might we minister to our members by being more deliberate in harnessing the power of what small groups have to offer? What things could we accomplish if we fed more of our members' spiritual needs through small group interaction?

- **Hope addresses sharing the gospel in ways that meet the needs of Christians and non-Christians** (i.e., hosting Families Moving Forward, sponsoring or hosting open lectures on topics concerning society, participating in public forums, etc.).

- ◆ The younger you are, the more strongly you agree that we do this. Those under 30 and over 65+ have very different perceptions about this, as is evidenced by the percentage of members that Strongly Agree representing various age categories in response to the Congregational Survey:

30 years or under	37%
31-50 years	26%
51-64 years	21%
65+ years	17%

- ◆ Overall, few members Disagree or Strongly Disagree that Hope addresses sharing the Gospel in ways that meet the needs of Christians and non-Christians alike. Of the 18 respondents that do, half of them (50%) are among our biggest financial giving group (\$4,000+ annually).

- **Hope fosters loving relationships** (i.e., caring, laughter, time spent together outside of Sunday morning).

- ◆ Younger members are far more enthused about this than are those over the age of 30 (50% Strongly Agree versus 22% of those 31 and over). Why? What is different about the experience of our young people that is not encountered by others?
 - ◆ When we look at where criticism comes from in this regard, one in four (26%) of the 31-50 year olds Disagree or Strongly Disagree that Hope fosters loving relationships outside the context of Sunday morning. Those with kids are most inclined to be in disagreement (21% versus those without kids– 9%). And if you have little ones under the age of six, you are particularly critical of how Hope stacks up in this regard (54% Disagree or Strongly Disagree).

What does this say about how we minister to the needs of young families? Might this not be a factor in why the pipeline into our Sunday School is on a significant decline?

UNSOLICITED DESCRIPTORS OF HOPE

The previous section reviews Congregational Survey respondents' perceptions of attributes that the MRTF specifically asked members to evaluate when thinking about Hope. We also asked members – off the top of their head – to share with us how they personally describe Hope to someone unfamiliar with our congregation.

Whether through the Congregational Survey, the one-on-one interviews or the focus groups, a lot of descriptors come to mind when members are asked how they describe Hope to someone who is not familiar with our congregation. The predominant characteristic centers on our worship and our musical abilities. The following list summarizes the attributes that emerged commonly across all three sources of feedback used in the data gathering process.

**How would you describe Hope
to someone who is not familiar with this church?**

- ♦ Worshipping / Traditional worship
- ♦ Musical community / Great music / Musically talented
- ♦ Thinking / Intellectual
- ♦ Open / Accepting
- ♦ Welcoming
- ♦ Liberal / Progressive
- ♦ Socially active / Social Justice
- ♦ Friendly / Caring
- ♦ Diverse
- ♦ Good people / Quality people

We took a look at how various segments of the congregation responding to the Congregational Survey describe Hope. What were the top five characteristics they associate with our congregation when describing us to others? Regardless of gender, income, contribution level or status of children at home, we all identify with Hope first and foremost as a “worshipping” and/or “musical” congregation. Some subtle, yet interesting, differences emerge when we look at other unsolicited, top-of-mind attributes used by various segments to describe our congregation.

For instance, members over the age of 65 and those without children in their household tend to describe Hope in terms of our relationship and interactions with others (e.g., friendly, caring, open, accepting, welcoming). This correlates with the perception the vast majority of these members have that we do a good job of fostering loving relationships outside of Sunday morning. On the other hand, our “thinking”-ness, social activism, and liberal mindedness are the top-of-mind characteristics used to describe Hope by members in their 30’s through 50’s and those with children at home.

The following table compares the top five characteristics various segments of the congregation use to describe Hope. As we think about growth and drawing in people that can identify with those things we value, what – if any – implications do these differences suggest?

**HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE HOPE
TO SOMEONE WHO IS NOT FAMILIAR WITH THIS CHURCH?
The Five Most Top-of-Mind Characteristics by Congregational Segment**

Total Respondents n = 195	Gender		Age			
	Male n = 70	Female n = 119	30 & Under n = 30	31-50 n = 53	51-64 n = 52	65+ n = 42
Worshipping / Musical (31%)	Worshipping / Musical (27%)	Worshipping / Musical (34%)	Worshipping / Musical (33%)	Worshipping / Musical (40%)	Worshipping / Musical (33%)	No response to this question (31%)
Thinking (16%)	Friendly / Caring (19%)	Open / Accepting (19%)	Open / Accepting (30%)	Thinking (26%)	Thinking (17%)	Friendly / Caring (26%)
Open / Accepting (15%)	Thinking (14%)	Thinking (18%)	Welcoming (27%)	Welcoming (23%)	Socially Active (17%)	Worshipping / Musical (19%)
Welcoming (14%)	Liberal / Progressive (13%)	Welcoming (17%)	Thinking (17%)	Socially Active (23%)	Liberal / Progressive (13%)	Open / Accepting (15%)
Liberal / Progressive (14%)	Welcoming (11%)	Socially Active (16%)	Liberal / Progressive (13%)	Liberal / Progressive (21%)	Diverse (13%)	Welcoming (12%)

Households					
Without Children at Home	With Children at Home	With Incomes Under \$100,000 Annually	With Incomes Over \$100,000 Annually	Contributing Under \$4,000 Annually	Contributing Over \$4,000 Annually
n = 115	n = 58	n = 129	n = 35	n = 107	n = 54
Worshipping / Musical (30%)	Worshipping / Musical (36%)	Worshipping / Musical (33%)	Worshipping / Musical (34%)	Worshipping / Musical (31%)	Worshipping / Musical (37%)
Open / Accepting (18%)	Thinking (26%)	Welcoming (18%)	Socially Active (26%)	Open / Accepting (19%)	Thinking (22%)
Friendly / Caring (17%)	Socially Active (24%)	Liberal / Progressive (18%)	Thinking (20%)	Friendly / Caring (19%)	Socially Active (20%)
Welcoming (14%)	Liberal / Progressive (16%)	Open / Accepting (17%)	Good people (17%)	Liberal / Progressive (18%)	Welcoming (15%)
Liberal / Progressive (14%)	Welcoming (14%)	Thinking (16%)	Small / Urban (14%)	Thinking (16%)	Good people (11%)

The following comments reflect the general themes of how our members describe Hope to those who are unfamiliar with our congregation.

“A church with a wonderful tradition of gospel-oriented ministry. Wonderful worship services. A congregation which has really struggled in recent years to define itself and maintain its membership. A church with a strong social justice emphasis.”

“A collection of talented, deep thinking, caring, people who appreciate high quality worship and high quality preaching; a church that draws from all areas of the Twin Cities.”

"This is a congregation with deep roots. It is a generationally-diverse church with a variety of family "structures" present and welcome. It is a place where music and worship are important and "traditional" is okay -- in fact, good. It is a Reconciling in Christ congregation."

"Hope is a liberal Lutheran church. It has strong families and people of all ages. The demographics show all age groups represented and the bulk in the 30-50 age range; it's not an "old" congregation."

"It's an interesting blend of traditional and intellectual inquiry. We evolve. We are a serious bunch of thinkers. ULCH is not necessarily an influential church but is full of influential people. ULCH has a depth of musical talent."

"It's politically left of center. Theologically orthodox (read long passages!!). The worship service is a real gathering, celebration. A friendly church. It's a nice place for people who don't have all the answers, some doubts, and Hope is open to many."

"Extraordinary richness of the people. What if we really knew each other? What an amazing community that can be tapped. Amazingly committed people. I would like to see their energy spent on things other than survival."

"Engaged, liturgical. Wanting to be friendly but a little shy. Great music. Good preaching. Lots of potential."

And there are those members who struggle to find words to describe who we are at this point in time:

"There's what Hope used to be versus today. It's hard to say what we are about now. We have an identity crisis. I don't know how to describe Hope without referring to the past."

"Hope is at a mid-life crisis. We have 'University' in our name, but the relationship is lame. A lot of our members are from suburban communities."

OUR GREATEST CONCERNS FOR HOPE

Members in one-on-one interviews and focus groups were asked to share their greatest concerns for our congregation. The following comments are representative of the predominant themes expressed.

Financial worries:

"Financial sustainability. An old building that will continue to need improvement. To continue the programs, we need a sizeable budget."

Dwindling numbers / Failing to draw people in:

"In the immediate, that we won't be able to pay our bills. We're struggling to make the budget on a day-to-day basis, let alone paying off a \$1.5 million building project. In the long term, my greatest concern is that we will die. That our membership will continue to gradually fall off as it has been doing for years and no one will admit it or take responsibility until it's too late. I look at how many members have left since I've joined, but rather than admitting there's a problem, everyone offers excuses: 'It was too far for them to drive.' 'They have small children, and there's another church closer.' There's almost always another church closer. We need to make ULCH a place people are willing to drive past those other churches to get to. So many people are willing to

commute five days a week to a job 45 minutes away, but for some reason they're not willing to commute twenty minutes on Sunday morning? That signifies a problem."

We've lost our groove:

"I'm afraid we've become irrelevant. Nobody would notice if we locked up shop. When was the last time the Synod came to ULCH for a committee member or church leadership?"

That nothing changes:

"That nothing will change and that doesn't mean we die, but that we just sit there!"

Keeping our youth engaged:

"Active children-, youth-, and family-friendly programs are a sign of a church that will grow."

WHAT WE SEE AS OUR GREATEST OPPORTUNITIES

Members in one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and the Congregational Survey were asked to share what they see as Hope's greatest opportunities for our congregation. The following comments are representative of the predominant themes expressed.

Ourselves:

"Hope has always had talented members. The members are Hope's greatest opportunity. Nurturing their talents and feeding them spiritually will allow Hope to grow and refresh programs within the church and community."

The University

"Being near the University. Having so many unreached people within a reasonable distance. Constantly revolving population – this provides a continuing opportunity."

New Members / Growth:

"To increase Hope's membership and grow it into a wonderful progressive, gospel-oriented congregation."

Youth / Young Adults:

"To reach out to young people - because young people become young families - and faithful members. We need to bring them through the doors - but then give them a reason to come back."

The Neighborhood:

"An evolving neighborhood with many potential ministry opportunities."

SOME CLOSING THOUGHTS FROM A “THINKING” CHURCH

When stepping back from the mountain of thoughts, insights and pearls of wisdom offered up in this phase of the Mission Renewal process, it is hard not to see how truly blessed we are as a congregation. We have many things going for us – strong bonds with each other, trust in our relationships and abilities, committed laity and staff, an abundance of talent. To top it off, we are not divided or embittered over thorny issues, and we have the capacity to re-imagine a future of new possibilities.

As members reflect on who we are, our intellect is seen as a core strength:

“People are encouraged to do active inquiry here. They are allowed to have questions. Worship and music provide the basis, the framework. Then people can use their intellect.”

“We used to be a social justice congregation. That was unique twenty years ago. It isn’t now. What is unique here are the Thinkers!”

“Our greatest opportunity relates to this country and its policies. Issue after issue is missed. This congregation, with its thoughtful people, could be prophetic.”

And there are those of us who place value in this, yet acknowledge that we need to push ourselves farther:

“[Hope is] a smart, creative congregation of people who need help turning outward in compassion and work for justice.”

“[Hope is] a well educated, thoughtful, middle class white church – not challenged enough.”

“The people and energy that exist at Hope could be harnessed and we could cultivate, empower and enrich people. Form a dialogue with each other and the world. No other church is out there engaging the Evangelical Right—we could host public dialogues to make our position on the issues clear. Hope could pull off a challenge to the Religious Right.”

“We have a message... The world doesn’t want pat answers. The world is screwed up and God still comes to us and says, ‘I love you and forgive you.’ We can take on the false messages with the Cross. We are a thinking, ‘Awe-ful’ church.”

This phase of the Mission Renewal process has truly required a lot of thinking and mental energy on the part of the MRTF and all those who have contributed to this process – the interviewers, the interviewees, the survey respondents, etc. As a result, we have a much better understanding of what is important to us as a congregation, where we are meeting needs and where we are not, what our concerns are and where we can see possibilities in going forward. And, through this discovery, we have also uncovered more questions – many of which need further exploration.

However, the intent is not to become immobilized in endless deep thinking. The next phase of this process is aimed at taking what has been revealed here and distilling it into defined strategies and action steps for a new beginning.

We may be a collection of thinkers, but we also have the ability and desire to do more than simply think. As one member noted, *“A large percentage of this congregation is ‘intelligentsia,’ i.e., pastors, pastor’s kids, U of M staff, doctors, lawyers. It’s important to use this. But we must stop talking and get moving. We need to see some action.”*

APPENDIX

HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS TASK FORCE REPORT

A problem common in many churches – not just Hope – is a lack of corporate memory, which often leads to reinventing wheels. The MRTF established the Historical Documents Task Force, chaired by Sharla Aaseng and comprised of team members, Louise Dovre Bjorkman, James Flatten and Uli Koester.

What has been and can be learned from our past experience? The intent is not to mire ourselves in the past – rather, it is to honor our history and values as a faith community, to put our decisions for the future into a context that can resonate with members.

Following is the Team’s report on the key themes, learnings and observations from historical information.



**The Objective of the Historical Documents Task Force:
To identify recurring themes that shed light on how we see ourselves as a congregation.**

The documents reviewed included:

- ♦ Long-Range Planning Report, 1996
- ♦ Congregational description as part of Pastor Shirley’s call, 2001
- ♦ “History of University Lutheran Church of Hope,” produced for the 100th Anniversary, 2004
- ♦ ISAIAH exploratory survey findings, 2004
- ♦ Worship Commission Task Force Report, 2005
- ♦ Kairos Report, 2005

The Historical Documents Task Force (HDTF) reviewed these documents in order to acknowledge our history and other recent surveys, etc. that have been done to help us determine our priorities, to highlight areas of constant importance to the congregation and to use as information for comparison with the current Mission Renewal Task Force data.

All the documents emphasize, in one way or another, what is best stated in the Kairos report as the four common values – “Commitment to excellent worship, providing inspiring music, passion for social justice, and a culture that welcomes diversity of opinion and meaningful dialogue.”

Now we will look at the various priorities and mission offerings of importance. These are not in any particular order of importance.

Worship/Music: Because worship and music is what brings new members to Hope (this is said over and over), we will start here. From the early years of this congregation to the present day, worship with challenging preaching, excellent music and traditional-style worship format have been a priority. Even though the size of the congregation is smaller today than in years past, this need has not changed. In recent years the introduction of more modern liturgical formats, musical

instruments and hymns bringing about the mix of traditional worship with a more contemporary style has by and large been welcomed. In 2001, little concern was noted about worship. However, the 2005 Worship Commission Task Force Report revealed significant concern about the overall worship experience. Interviewees indicated they were looking for more dynamic and challenging worship and preaching, that they had concerns about the length of the services and questioned service times and organization. These unresolved interests and concerns are beyond the scope of the HDTF's report.

Social Justice: This has always been of major importance at Hope. The focus of social justice activities and study has changed over the years, as pastors have changed and as society has changed. The pastors as well as lay leaders have urged the congregation to be involved in many important, controversial issues of the times such as racism, equality, use of inclusive language, world peace, environmental concerns, human sexuality and homelessness. Although the issues change with the times and community needs, we continue our commitment to social justice by our participation in and financial support to such programs as Loaves & Fishes, FMF, and Interfaith Action.

Service to Local & Global Communities: In the past, we were an urban church with the majority of our membership from the surrounding southeast neighborhood and a strong sense of mission to southeast and to the University students. However, in the recent years the demographics of the neighborhood and the membership at Hope have changed dramatically. The neighborhood housing is more rental as opposed to owner-occupied, the students, and transient. Fewer Hope members live in southeast, averaging a 6-7 mile commute to attend church (per the 2001 pastoral call document). In the 1996 report and also in the recent Kairos report (2005), Hope was defined as a metropolitan church. With that, we still contribute much to our local community (the annual rummage sale, use of facility for meetings of local groups, P.E.A.S.E, etc.). In addition, we have continued and expanded our involvement in the greater community (e.g., ISALAH, Families Moving Forward, etc.) and extended further into the global community as witnessed by our support of the Malawi community in which we have chosen to be involved.

Education: Hope has a long tradition of having highly educated members who embrace the importance of youth and adult education and the value of intellectual discourse. Education of children and adults is important, but the formal structures have varied. It is one of the ongoing "do we or don't we" issues concerning paid versus lay staffing of our education director. Good education for young children, our youth and adults has always been a priority. How we accomplished that has varied. This has come in the form of lay leaders in the role of education director for Sunday school, a full-time staff person, a part-time paid staff person, pastoral responsibility, commission responsibility and various scenarios. If we look at it more closely, we may see some of the changes related to budget issues and demographics relating to the number of children and youth at Hope at the time. But regardless, finding the best way to provide good educational opportunities for all members remains a constant priority.

Physical Space: This has always been important to Hope members. In 1954 when the Education wing was constructed, the congregation took a huge risk. Now, 52 years later, we are upgrading this space. We have done several other updates, renovations and repairs as needed to keep the building in good repair. In the 1996 Long Range Planning Report, five specific areas for improvement were highlighted: computer/database systems; the heating system; stained glass windows; window/door systems; the bell tower parapets. The only remaining pieces not completed are the issues around the stained glass windows and the larger courtyard doors. It is clear from our recent overwhelming support for the "Room for Fresh Creations" campaign and the former capital campaigns that maintenance of the physical space is an ongoing priority.

Youth: The focus on youth and activities has had its ups and downs over the years. However, one of the three most important responsibilities identified for Pastor Shirley in his call process (2001) was ministry to youth and families. We have hired Audrey Keller to assist in this process. This is clearly a priority for this congregation. (As a special note: the discussions from the Dream Team and the “Fresh Creations for a New Generation” information will be of tremendous value. These young adults have definite ideas and opinions that will greatly contribute to the ministry of this congregation as a whole.)

Small Group Ministries: In some way, the smaller group with a specific focus whether circles, quilters, bible studies, etc. has always been a part of Hope. Recently, the ISAIAH Report (2004) and the Kairos Report (2005) highlighted the desire to keep small groups with special interests an on-going presence at Hope. These help build relationships, strengthen the sense of community, and offer chances for more intergenerational interactions. It has been said, “I joined Hope because of the worship but stayed because of the people and relationships.”

Concerns: Some members continue to express that Hope has a lot of thinkers and not a lot of doers. However, others feel that it is more a matter of reorganization of our management style and looking at the structures of people’s workdays today, being respectful of time and efficient with meetings and changing expectations of participation. This was a concern in the 1996 Long Range Planning Report, and 10 years later we are still concerned with how best to use staff, lay persons and the talents of this congregation. An overarching question is, “How do we define ourselves in a way that tells outsiders who we are so we can grow?”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

As part of the data gathering process the MRTF conducted 33 one-on-one interviews. These interviews are comprised of six staff members, the Congregational President, two Board members, 21 members representing cross-segments of the congregation, and three individuals formerly belonging to Hope. Following is a summary of the themes that emerged from the feedback offered through this process.

2. What do you need to stimulate and nurture your faith?

- ♦ Community / Relationships with others (11)
- ♦ Worship (8)
- ♦ Provocative sermons / relevant preaching (8)
- ♦ Intellectual Challenge (6)
- ♦ Discourse / Discussion (5)
- ♦ Music (4)
- ♦ Opportunities to be involved (3)
- ♦ Prayer / Meditation (2)
- ♦ Social Justice (2)
- ♦ Misc. (3)

3. What do you look for in a church to meet your faith needs?

- ♦ Community / Relationships with Others / Groups (8)
- ♦ Meaningful Worship (7)
- ♦ Liberal Perspectives (7)
- ♦ Clergy / Laity (5)
- ♦ Social Justice / Social awareness (4)
- ♦ Music (3)
- ♦ Intellectual Challenge (3)
- ♦ Faith development for children (3)
- ♦ Preaching (2)
- ♦ Misc. (4)

4. What do you perceive Hope's mission currently to be?

- ♦ A Lot of Different Missions (7)
- ♦ Social Justice (5)
- ♦ Don't Know (4)
- ♦ Spreading the Gospel (3)
- ♦ Diversity in Outreach (3)
- ♦ To serve the needs of our members (3)
- ♦ To discuss / take action on current societal issues (2)

5. Is it important to you that Hope continue to exist into the future? Why?

- ♦ To build on our history and be here for future generations. (8)
- ♦ For the most part yes, but can envision a future without Hope. (6)
- ♦ We serve a niche (5)
- ♦ Our presence is needed in the local community. (4)
- ♦ Our Intellectual Pursuit / Critical Thinking (2)
- ♦ We are healthy / have potential. (2)
- ♦ Misc. (1)

Executive Summary: One-on-One Interviews (continued)

6. **What do you think Hope's mission priorities should be for the future?**
 - ♦ Education (6)
 - ♦ Serve our members' faith needs (4)
 - ♦ Social Justice (4)
 - ♦ Outreach beyond our walls (4)
 - ♦ Neighborhood Focus (3)
 - ♦ Student/University Outreach (3)
 - ♦ Youth (2)
 - ♦ Misc. (4)

7. **What role do you see lay leadership having in implementing Hope's future mission priorities?**
 - ♦ Affirmation of Lay Leadership (18)
 - ♦ Burnout / Busyness (5)
 - ♦ Organizational Structure (4)
 - ♦ Staff and Laity (3)
 - ♦ Manage / Coordinate Volunteers and Tasks (1)
 - ♦ Miscellaneous (5)

8. **What role do you see staff having in implementing Hope's future mission priorities?**
 - ♦ Guide / Encourage / Motivate / Support (9)
 - ♦ Managing / Administrating (11)
 - ♦ Mission Support (6)
 - ♦ Preaching / Education (3)
 - ♦ Miscellaneous (6)

9. **How important is it to you that Hope plays a role in the surrounding community? Why?**
 - ♦ Neighborhood / Surrounding community outreach is important (13)
 - ♦ University Student community outreach is important (7)
 - ♦ Metro Outreach (2)
 - ♦ Miscellaneous (3)

10. **How important is it to you that this congregation be involved beyond the surrounding community? Why?**
 - ♦ It's important that we heighten awareness and participate in the global world. (10)
 - ♦ There are urban needs in the surrounding community (7)
 - ♦ We have a responsibility to the larger church / greater community. (5)
 - ♦ It's not as important as being involved locally (2)
 - ♦ Misc. (1)

Executive Summary: One-on-One Interviews (continued)

11. How would you describe Hope to someone who is not familiar with this church?

- ♦ Traditional worship (9)
- ♦ Great Music / Musically Talented (9)
- ♦ Liberal / Progressive (8)
- ♦ Welcoming (7)
- ♦ Quality people (6)
- ♦ Open-minded (4)
- ♦ Diverse (4)
- ♦ Social Justice (4)
- ♦ Intellectual / Thinking (3)
- ♦ Good preaching (3)
- ♦ Beautiful building (2)
- ♦ Community Outreach (2)

12. What is your greatest concern for this congregation?

- ♦ Financial (7)
- ♦ Failing to draw people in (7)
- ♦ That nothing changes (6)
- ♦ That something of significance changes (4)
- ♦ Misc. (5)

13. What do you see as Hope's greatest opportunity?

- ♦ Ourselves / the untapped potential of our members (6)
- ♦ Students/University (6)
- ♦ The neighborhood (5)
- ♦ To be socially relevant (4)
- ♦ The Mission Renewal / defining process we are going through (4)
- ♦ PEASE (2)
- ♦ Youth (2)
- ♦ Misc. (3)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

As part of the data gathering process, the MRTF conducted focus groups with the following: New Members, Parents, Seniors, Singles, Youth, and Past Presidents. Following is a summary of the themes that emerged from the feedback offered through this process.

1. Name one thing you like about Hope. (ice breaker question)

- ♦ The sense of community / relationships / people (11)
- ♦ Music (6)
- ♦ Worship (5)
- ♦ Preaching (4)
- ♦ Social Justice (3)
- ♦ Openness, acceptance (3)
- ♦ The atmosphere (2)
- ♦ Diversity (2)
- ♦ Connecting to the world (2)

2. How can this church best stimulate and nurture your faith?

- ♦ Community / Relationships with others / Groups (16)
- ♦ Worship (10)
- ♦ Music (3)
- ♦ Provocative sermons / relevant preaching (9)
- ♦ Intellectual Challenge / Education (7)
- ♦ Youth Involvement (4)
- ♦ Misc. (3)

3. What do you perceive Hope's mission currently to be?

I don't know (13)

- ♦ Don't know (Questions/Factors pondered by members in regard to mission) (6)
- ♦ Don't know / I don't think we have one (5)
- ♦ Don't know / Specific suggestions for missional focus (2)
- ♦ We have a Lot of Different Missions (3)

Specific Perceptions

- ♦ Being open, accepting, welcoming (9)
- ♦ Grappling with hard issues and questions (6)
- ♦ Social Justice (5)
- ♦ Outreach to Community (5)
- ♦ Outreach to Students (4)
- ♦ Life long learning / Education (3)
- ♦ Passing on the faith (2)
- ♦ Generating excitement (2)

Executive Summary: Focus Group Interviews (continued)

4. What do you think Hope's mission priorities should be for the future?

- ♦ Tending to our members' needs (16)
- ♦ Worship / Music (8)
- ♦ Being welcoming / Inclusive (5)
- ♦ Outreach beyond our walls (4)
- ♦ Modifying our organizational structure (4)
- ♦ Student/University Outreach (3)
- ♦ Generating excitement / a reason to come (2)
- ♦ Education (2)
- ♦ Social Justice (2)
- ♦ Misc. (7)

5. What role do you see lay leadership having in implementing Hope's future mission priorities?

- ♦ Affirmation of Lay Leadership (11)
- ♦ Organizational Structure (5)
- ♦ Staff and Laity (4)
- ♦ Manage / Coordinate Volunteers and Tasks (3)
- ♦ Burnout / Busyness (2)
- ♦ Training (2)
- ♦ Miscellaneous (3)

6. What role do you see staff having in implementing Hope's future mission priorities?

- ♦ Guide / Encourage / Motivate / Support (6)
- ♦ Recruit / Involve / Train (6)
- ♦ Visitation / Connecting (4)
- ♦ Managing / Administrating (3)
- ♦ Mission Support (3)
- ♦ Outreach (3)
- ♦ Preaching / Education (2)
- ♦ Miscellaneous (2)

7. How important is it to you that Hope plays a role in the surrounding community and beyond? Why?

- ♦ Neighborhood / Surrounding community outreach is important (11)
- ♦ University Student community outreach is important (7)
- ♦ It's important – but not at the expense of tending to our current needs. (4)
- ♦ It's important that we do a better job integrating new people. (3)
- ♦ It's important – as this is the mission of the universal church. (3)
- ♦ It's important – but get the right balance. (3)
- ♦ What appeals to new members? (2)
- ♦ Miscellaneous (10)

Executive Summary: Focus Group Interviews (continued)

8. What is your greatest concern for this congregation?

- ♦ Dwindling Numbers (12)
- ♦ Financial Challenges (6)
- ♦ We've Lost Our Groove (6)
- ♦ Keeping Our Youth Engaged (5)
- ♦ Drawing People In (4)
- ♦ Honoring the Past (3)
- ♦ Our Mission (2)
- ♦ Respecting Differences within Our Congregational Community (2)
- ♦ Miscellaneous (3)

SYSTEMS INVENTORY AUDIT RESULTS

This inventory was provided by Kairos and relates directly to the attributes of a healthy congregation being organized strategically around its mission and vision. The data reflected here is the compilation of responses from 18 individuals who are on staff, currently on the Board of Commissioners, the MRTF or have served as Past President of the congregation in recent years.

Kairos Introduction to Congregational Systems Theory

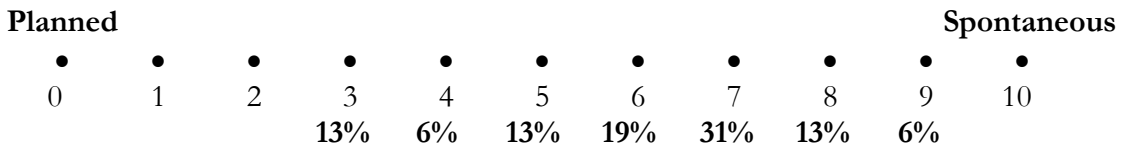
All organizations live between the excesses of chaos and over control. Congregations are likely to be at their best when they maintain a healthy tension between the requirements of living in community (integration) and the need in each person to be an individual (differentiation).

Living in tension means living with contention. When the level of contention drops too low, congregations tend to become frozen or brittle. No challenge means patterns of doing and thinking become too rigid. On the other hand, too much change or contention can also be a problem. When anger levels are high or we don't know what to expect next, life in a congregation can be chaotic and the organization loses its ability to get on with its work.

Kairos has selected seven dimensions of a congregation's system. In each dimension a healthy tension is needed in a congregation. At both ends of each dimension represent valued tendencies or polarities. These contending opposites are *both* needed for effective and vital congregational functioning. The challenge is to live in the tension between these opposites and to use the tension as a source of energy for ongoing renewal.

STRATEGY

Definition Strategy is the way congregations put their vision into practice. This dimension might also be called planning or mission.



Average = 6.1

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Developing a clear sense of purpose and direction and direction ■ Connecting goals and objectives to that purpose ■ Bringing organizational criteria to bear on the evaluation of ministry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Maintaining an openness to God's leading... ■ Remaining responsive to emerging opportunities and needs... ■ Using members' gifts and talents flexibly |
|--|---|

Systems Inventory Audit Results (continued)

AUTHORITY

Definition: Authority is the ability to influence decision-making in the congregation. This dimension refers to the extent to which authority is concentrated in the hands of a few people or dispersed to larger groups or the entire congregation.

Concentrated



Dispersed

Average = 6.9

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Shaping ministry with decisive leadership ■ Empowering talented groups and individuals to act ■ Maintaining consistency in leadership roles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consulting the larger congregation about important issues ■ Bringing new people into leadership roles ■ Encouraging “grass roots” decision making |
|---|---|

PROCESS

Definition: Process refers to the information sharing and decision-making procedures in a congregation and the extent to which these procedures are clearly defined and regulated or variable and left to the discretion of individuals.

Mandatory



Discretionary

Average = 6.3

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Developing and following clear guidelines for decision making ■ Providing a conflict management map ■ Connecting the parts of the congregation with good information flow | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Encouraging individual initiative toward problem solving ■ Allowing grace (love) to supersede law (rules) ■ Adapting decision-making process to fit the situation |
|---|---|

Systems Inventory Audit Results (continued)

PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

Definition: Pastoral leadership is the ability of the pastor(s) to generate *intended* change in an organization.

Managerial

● 0 ● 1

● 2

● 3

● 4

● 5

● 6

● 7

● 8

13% 19% 19% 25% 13%

Transformation

● 9 ● 10

Average = 5.6

- Organizing resources to develop current directions
- Guiding people to do systematic problem solving
- Focusing on practical results in the short run
- Shaping a vision for new directions
- Inspiring people to create change
- Focusing on future possibilities

RELATEDNESS

Definition: Relatedness is the way members of an organization work together, especially whether their work is done cooperatively or independently.

Collegial

● 0 ● 1

● 2

● 3

● 4

● 5

● 6

● 7

● 8

19% 13% 13% 19% 19% 6%

Individual

● 9 ● 10

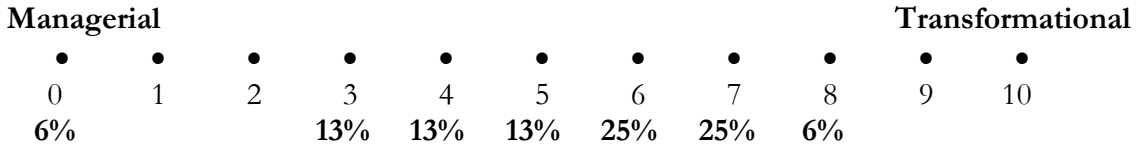
Average = 5.4

- Encouraging cooperative efforts to do the work of the ministry
- Collaborating to make decisions as a team
- Emphasizing team play and harmonious relationships
- Placing a premium on individual initiative
- Freeing individuals and smaller groups to pursue their calling
- Encouraging the free expression of ideas

Systems Inventory Audit Results (continued)

LAY LEADERSHIP

Definition: Lay leadership is the ability of lay leaders to generate intended change in an organization.

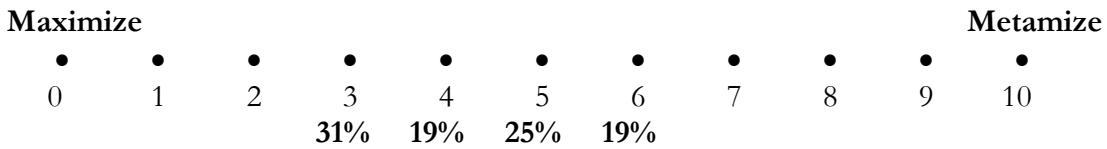


Average = 5.3

- Organizing people to do their part toward the larger goals
- Overseeing projects and committees to insure task completion
- Focusing on practical results in the short run
- Helping members capture a vision or new direction
- Inspiring people to create change
- Focusing on future possibilities

LEARNING

Definition: Learning is a congregation's orientation toward the past or future as it experiments with improving its life and ministry.



Average = 4.2

- Building on the congregation's strengths
- Learning from past successes to develop the future
- Enhancing the congregation's distinctive competencies
- Going beyond current strengths to develop something new
- Learning from that which is new and untried
- Building new competencies that are discontinuous with the past

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY EVALUATION RESULTS

When is a parish an effective Christian community? According to the early Christian Church, three essential activities needed to be done well: **(I) Kerygma (Proclamation); (II) Koinonia (Christian Fellowship); and (III) Diakonia (Service to Others).**

This inventory was provided by Kairos. The data reflected here is the compilation of responses from 18 individuals who are on staff, currently on the Board of Commissioners, the MRTF or have served as Past President of the congregation in recent years.

I. Kerygma (Proclamation) Is this a Good News place?

- Message: a strong message of faith, hope and love being proclaimed in the parish?

Average = 4.3

1-low	2	3	4	5-high
		19%	31%	50%

- Music: the Good News is put into fine musical form and all are encouraged to participate.

Average = 4.8

1-low	2	3	4	5-high
			25%	75%

- Witness: members share good News with each other formally and informally.

Average = 3.3

1-low	2	3	4	5-high
6%	6%	56%	13%	19%

- Growth Opportunities: quality growth opportunities are provided for **children**.

Average = 4.1

1-low	2	3	4	5-high
		19%	56%	25%

- Growth Opportunities: quality growth opportunities are provided for **youth**.

Average = 4.0 (no response = 13%)

1-low	2	3	4	5-high
		25%	38%	25%

- Growth Opportunities: quality growth opportunities are provided for **adults**.

Average = 3.6 (no response = 13%)

1-low	2	3	4	5-high
	13%	19%	44%	13%

- Lay Ministry: members are trained, supported and encouraged in their daily life ministry for themselves, their families, the community and the world.

Average = 3.4

1-low	2	3	4	5-high
	13%	44%	38%	6%

Christian Community Evaluation Results (continued)

II. Koinonia (Christian Fellowship)

- *Acceptance: do you feel accepted and supported here?*

Average = 4.4				
1-low	2	3	4	5-high
		19%	25%	56%

- *Unity: is there a strong feeling of togetherness in the congregation?*

Average = 3.6				
1-low	2	3	4	5-high
	13%	31%	44%	13%

- *Warm Welcome: are newcomers to the parish included quickly in the caring fellowship of the parish?*

Average = 2.8				
1-low	2	3	4	5-high
19%	13%	38%	31%	

- *Friendships: does the parish provide members with many opportunities to be in settings where they can meet, support, and get to know better their fellow parishioners?*

Average = 3.3				
1-low	2	3	4	5-high
13%	6%	31%	44%	6%

III. Diakonia (Service to Others)

- *I am satisfied with the ministry of this parish to those outside the congregation who are in need, pain or difficulty.*

Average = 3.4				
1-low	2	3	4	5-high
6%	19%	19%	44%	13%

- *This parish gives me many opportunities to join with fellow parishioners in service to a broken world.*

Average = 3.8				
1-low	2	3	4	5-high
	13%	13%	56%	19%

- *I am pleased with the benevolence giving of this parish.*

Average = 3.9				
1-low	2	3	4	5-high
6%	6%	19%	25%	44%

UNIVERSITY LUTHERAN CHURCH OF HOPE'S CURRENT MISSION STATEMENT

To know Christ and make Christ known by proclaiming
God's saving word in worship, community and service.

Current Strategic Priorities

Service:

To serve one another, our neighborhoods and the world with love and justice,
celebrating the Gospel of Christ in our work and daily lives.

Community:

To inspire members and others to come together with Christ at the center;
to be a community that welcomes, worships and prays together –
demonstrating our commitment to be disciples of Christ in all we do and say.

Growth:

To hear God's call to grow in faith
and our capacity to reach out to the world with grace and compassion,
thereby strengthening participation in Hope's worship, programs and activities.