

The Way Process

In early 2006 the session of First Presbyterian Church contracted with NorthStar Consulting to conduct interviews of church members and friends as part of a visioning process for the future of the church. As a result of those interviews, NorthStar recommended an intense study and visioning process. An open invitation to all members and friends of the church was made and three groups were formed, each to study a specific area of the church. The groups were Building, Youth and Family Ministry, and Worship and Music. Those who joined the three groups are as follows:

Building: Hank Billingsley, Mark Bourque, Boyd Frederick, Janet Frieman, David Hamelink Jr., Marcy Hufendick, Norma Jones, Kathie Mandry, Ron Meinhardt, Harold Piehl, David Robinson, Lydia Spottswood, Lee West

Youth and Family Ministry: Jean Heinold, Jerome Hufendick, Julie Iorio, Miriam Johnson, Beverly McPherson, Sara Miles, Kellen Pottorff, Julia Robinson, Paul Spottswood, Karen Sorenson, Dorothy Thompson

Worship and Music: Erika Behling, Sandy Billingsley, Jan Brandes, Heather Casiano, Linnea Elrod, Garth Kovachik, Charles Leicht, Lance Loveall, Pat Meinhardt, John Miles, Susan Otto, Leslie Pottorff, Mary Wirch

Each group set their own schedule, but all groups met roughly once a week with periodic breaks. The first six meetings consisted of Way process Bible study only; no work conducted in the groups designated area. This was a time for focusing on following the Holy Spirit, centering on God, learning to listen and conduct business differently, and being moved by God's Word. Each group reported feeling bonds quickly growing between members, many of whom were new to each other, and the reluctance to share that each felt soon faded away. The Way method of study asks for the group to hear the same Scripture passage a number of times, each time followed by silence as each person reflects on a question about how the passage touches their lives, and then each is given the opportunity to share while each other person in the group can only listen with no response. The sessions are opened with each member discussing the state of his/her prayer life in the past week and ends with members praying for each other.

After six meetings of Bible study and reflection, each group began its work. Meetings opened with a shortened version of the Way process and moved into the work of the group after being reminded of the church's mission statement. At this point each group handled its business differently, but the first item of business was to gauge the scope of the work in front of the group and set the agenda for what the group would hope to accomplish. The principles of the Way process remained important throughout the work phase and all members report feeling the Spirit lead the entire process.

And now, as part of the visioning process, the Way Groups hand these recommendations over to the session and the congregation for consideration. We look

upon these recommendations as a call process. We have felt the Spirit of God leading our work and guiding us to these conclusions, which is the internal aspect of calling. Now, as we turn this process over to the church for prayerful consideration, the process, and the recommendations, become property of the church for confirmation, alteration, and prioritization.

On behalf of all the members of each of the three groups, thank you to the session and congregation for your support and trust during this process. Though the business of the groups was handled in confidence so as to keep the group the core focus for the work, everyone in the church seemed to understand the time it takes to come up with quality results in such diverse groups. Thank you for the trust you put in us, and thank you for this opportunity to serve God through visioning for the future of this congregation.