

Results of Group Meetings
Conducted November 18-20, 2013

Centennial United Methodist Church

April 2, 2014

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Part I – Introduction

During the fall of 2013 a committee of Pastor Gary Forster, Jeff Freel, Gaylen Heaberlin and Tim Morgan was established to study the needs of the congregation and surrounding community of Centennial United Methodist Church. The goals were to determine Centennial's strengths and weaknesses and the current and future needs of its congregation.

Group meetings were conducted on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings of November 18, 19 and 20, 2013. All who attend Centennial were invited to participate in the discussions.

Each evening participants first completed a written survey gathering information about how and when they were first introduced to Centennial and their opinions about different aspects of church life at Centennial. After completing the surveys participants were divided into groups of 3 to 7 people, which gathered in various areas of the church. Each group used the same schedule for topics to be discussed; each group also chose a recorder who took notes about the discussion. The recorded notes were returned to the committee. During the three evenings 45 members of the Centennial congregation participated in the discussions.

After the notes were compiled the committee added Nancy Day, Carol Graves and Dana King. The committee then compiled this report.

Part II - Conclusions

The discussions of our congregation lead the committee to form 18 hypotheses and an outline of the support and services Centennial could provide to our congregation members at various stages of life.

The hypotheses are detailed in Part III and they have been grouped into three categories –

True and supported by the Group Discussions

Probably true but not completely supported by the Group Discussions

Inconclusive as the Group Discussions didn't provide enough information to formulate answers.

There is only one hypothesis in the Inconclusive category, the other 17 hypotheses should be shared with the congregation and church committees to keep Centennial focused on what our members need, what Centennial's strengths are and what Centennial needs to continually work at so we maintain our strengths and the atmosphere that allow us to serve our congregation and our community.

The results of the group discussions about the different stages of life should also be used as a tool by the leadership of Centennial when determining future programs, activities and priorities and those are also found in Part III.

The one hypothesis needing more study deals with expansion of the church facility. There was some discussion during the group meetings but not enough to determine if the congregation feels significantly different than the most recent vote conducted in September 2011 when the 77.2% of the 92 congregation members who voted agreed that "Centennial should continue the process of determining the right expansion design for the church building and property". As a result this committee is working to organize the information gathered in 2010 and 2011 so that it can be used "to continue the process of determining" the future design for Centennial.

Part III – Hypotheses

Based on the comments at the Group Discussion meetings hypotheses have been developed that are possible conclusions to be drawn about Centennial. These statements have varying degrees of supporting comments during the meetings. Some of these conclusions may be obviously true, others may require more study before all accept that they are true and perhaps others may eventually be found to be false.

1. We use food well.
2. We use hymns well.
3. We are a traditional church.
4. Our size makes it easy for us to know most others in church.
5. Because we know each other we care about each other.
6. Because we know each other we are friendly.
7. There is a sense of family here.
8. A feeling that those who leave after Sunday School are missing something by not attending church services and those who come just for church are missing out as well.
9. Adult Sunday School classes need to be high quality.
10. There is much interest in study groups.
11. There is interest in social gatherings.
12. There is some fear that our friendly attitude isn't consistent.
13. General feeling that our parking, fellowship hall and sanctuary size and rest rooms don't give the appearance we are able to handle new families.
14. We need a method for members to make suggestions, an environment where members feel that their suggestions will be considered and committee leadership that is receptive to suggestions by finding ways to maintain our traditions while expanding.
15. Communications is a continual process. It shows how committed the leaders of the church are to the members and how much members want the church to improve.
16. Members discovered Centennial by –
 - a. chance visit
 - b. invitation
 - c. those searching for a church like they use to know
 - d. being raised there;so we need to continue to be inviting on many different levels by doing everything we do as well as we can.
17. We should provide activities for more groups than just Sunday School, Youth Group and UMW.
18. Many believe that nursery care during worship service is very important and our system of using volunteers has not had satisfactory results.

It appears that these hypotheses are true and no additional study is needed.

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11. There is interest in social gatherings.
16. Members discovered Centennial by... – so we need to continue to be inviting on many different levels by doing everything we do as well as we can.

These hypotheses are probably true but not completely supported by the discussions; however they are good goals so rather than study them further we should just use our time and effort to improve these areas

5. Because we know each other we care about each other.
6. Because we know each other we are friendly.
8. A feeling that those who leave after Sunday School are missing something by not attending church services and those who come just for church are missing out as well.
9. Adult Sunday School classes need to be high quality.
12. There is some fear that our friendly attitude isn't consistent.
14. We need a method for members to make suggestions, an environment where members feel that their suggestions will be considered and committee leadership that is receptive to suggestions by finding ways to maintain our traditions while expanding.
15. Communications is a continual process. It shows how committed the leaders of the church are to the members and how much members want the church to improve.
17. We should provide activities for more groups than just Sunday School, Youth Group and UMW.
18. Many believe that nursery care during worship service is very important and our system of using volunteers has not had satisfactory results.

Not conclusive more study is needed

13. General feeling that our parking, fellowship hall and sanctuary size and rest rooms don't give the appearance we are able to handle new families.

Conclusions of the Discussion Group Meetings of how Centennial can best serve various groups by life stages

1. Youth
 - a. Remind college students we are thinking of them
 - b. Acknowledge in church and newsletter the accomplishments of our youth in non-church activities.
 - c. Use Facebook
 - d. Send college students the newsletter
 - e. Ask them to help with church activities
2. Out-of-School and Single
 - a. Give them more involvement & responsibilities
 - b. Form groups for them
3. Starting a Family
 - a. Provide nursery services during church
 - b. Invite them to become more involved.
 - c. Sunday School class
 - d. Baby showers....help family during births....baby sit
4. Families with school age children
 - a. Help families build memories
 - b. Support kids in school events
 - c. Vacation Bible School
 - d. Sunday School classes
 - e. Youth projects
 - f. Confirmation class
 - g. Camps
5. Empty nesters
 - a. Help them be involved in the church without kids
 - b. Help them explore their faith at this new stage
6. Retired
 - a. Help them use their "new" time for the church
 - b. Create social activities for them
 - c. Create faith groups for them
7. After a spouse is lost
 - a. Create support groups
 - b. Provide resources to them
 - i. Meals
 - ii. Lawn mowing
 - iii. Snow removal
 - iv. Transportation to church events
 - c. Remind them they are remembered
 - i. Cards
 - ii. Visits
 - iii. Love Baskets
 - iv. Christmas Caroling
 - d. Social groups

Other thoughts

More quiet in sanctuary

Sometimes peer pressure is used too blatantly

People don't like to change

We are stuck in a rut

Perhaps we should contact folks who have left to see why

Non-church children activities interfere with church

It is good that we don't constantly ask for money.

Centennial Needs.....

Contact with our neighbors who could join us.

New photo directory

Part IV – Summary of Group Discussion Comments

Recorded comments from the Discussion Group meetings are grouped here by topic.

Things about Centennial that are challenges, negatives or should be added.

Programs

Not satisfied with existing Sunday School
Sunday School over and those leave – not go to the service.
Don't come to adult Sunday School.
Might come if a different Sunday School but not enough.
Possibly church and Sunday School at same time to encourage parents to stay for church.
More studies.
More programs – bible study groups (bible & social)
 Youth programs
 20's & 30's group other than Sunday School
Book Study groups – evenings & daytime on weekday
More fellowship activities
Social gatherings – breakfast's hayrack rides
Participation in church sponsored activities such as picnic.
Men's Saturday breakfast
Men's Group – combination of breakfast and bible
More involvement of UMW with people
UMW larger and study groups – miss that
Saturday evening service
Contracting previous members on why they left
Part-time vs. full-time pastors
Church needs members to survive
Not much happens anymore – lack of interest
Stuck in Rut
Kids' activities interfere with fellowship and service.

People

More interest in fellowship (tonight is an example)
Fellowship should be bigger
Maybe more personal outreach
Don't know each other
Get to know each other
Don't be afraid to communicate to other members.
It seems most new members already know someone here.
Member growth
Addition of new younger families.
Young people need socialization.
Have witnessed a couple being ignored at fellowship.
Click-ish
People don't like to change! Request choir to sing with organ or anthem – won't – never tried it.
Be willing to change
More quiet in sanctuary before church service – reverence
Quiet the congregation before the service!!

Couple of people can bother you.
If you don't show up, you are chastised.

Facilities

More parking
Increase parking lot size
Parking lot
Bigger fellowship hall
Fellowship Hall
Room in fellowship hall
Expand fellowship hall & sanctuary without
the over flow problem.
Change the size of kitchen and fellowship
hall
His & Hers restrooms

The rear of sanctuary maybe should be
larger
Increase size of sanctuary
Larger sanctuary, if we want growth.
Need more space.
Wheel chair lift
Need larger kitchen and dishwasher.
Holidays and funerals are packed.
Fewer mice.
Memorials

Administration

We've always done it that way
Have an open mind. Be open to change, be willing to step down and let someone do something
different.
Committees need mentors and more people.
Encourage all members to express their ideas and provide a place for them to put them.
Newsletter – big change is needed (PPR has known this for several years)
Timely newsletter
Groups don't communicate
Continue to improve communication.
Wish there was better communication (for instance – email goes to Jim's not mine)
Reach out to past members – why did they leave; invite them back to church.
Usher / greeters on the wall – some didn't know
More visits for shut-ins.
No follow-up after first visit.
Reminds him of the church of 70 years ago.
Like to see fall worship time moved up ½ hour.
What is good can also be bad.
Good that we don't constantly ask for money

How I chose to attend Centennial (*Summary – all comments fit into one of these*)

Word of mouth
Invitation
Visited Centennial for another reason and discovered people they knew
Wanted a church like I grew up in
Location
Life changing experience showed us it was time
Raised in this church
Married into it
Saw the building, mailing, newspaper, etc.

What it takes or will take to recruit new people to Centennial

Programs

Reaching out
Family things
Men things
Women things
Women's group – good leaders
Social programs
Adult Sunday School
Sunday School classes for all ages
Need Bible School!
Bible studies
Live nativity
Youth group
Paid nursery
Don't like the dropping of programs
Promote programs to draw members
Recruit children and get parents involved
Member stands up and introduces the prospective members.
Always had dinner days

Pastoral support

Bible studies
New members' class
2 pastors – strengthen & focus on areas
Youth pastor
More duties for pastor
More of a leadership role in church
Responsibility of ushers and pastor to greet – WATCH FOR THIS
Getting married and use the church
Attractive for 2nd
Always a drawing card.

Facilities

We are very attractive
Setting of building is attractive
Like to have wireless mic
Growth – fellowship / sanctuary
Bigger fellowship area
Enlarge fellowship hall
Larger kitchen & fellowship hall
Library upstairs
2 restrooms upstairs
Restrooms
Bigger parking lot
Parking lot
Wi-Fi
Heat

People

Friendly with open arms
Church family is very accepting
Get to know each other better
Coffee and dinner day
Hanging of greens
Very strong sense of belonging
Round tables allow everyone to talk
Family spread
Competition regarding food – tone down
Cliques

Administration

Give out pens
Welcome basket or bag
Mailings –
 Welcoming new people moving in
 Fresh list
 Welcome wagon by zip code
Bulk mailings 1200 Advent / Lent Altoona Herald – list every week
Answering machine UNICEF
Definitely need a new directory
Church directory
Talk to contact previous members and inquire as to why they left
Advent and Lenten cards
Communication sends cards to visitors
Conservative financially when it is not for physical building
Has been by word of mouth but that is not enough now
Small church and want it that way

Stages of Life

School age or younger

What we do

Glad to see Torie back
Send care packages
Care packages to students
Care packages to college kids
Send “thinking of you” packages
Students’ names on map
Provide spiritual support
Graduation recognition
They do come back in the summer time and holidays

What additional things we should do

Don’t know what they do
Could recognize students, where they are going
Suggest – churches in college area
Facebook to stay connected
Newsletter to the kids
Send out packets that list local church support in college area
Keep them in the loop.
Make sure we have email addresses
Items should be in the newsletter or ask the kids to share in newsletter what’s happening for them.
Formalized contact
Mission projects.

Out of school age and single

What we do

Provided a place to grow and learn
Always feel welcome everywhere
Kids feel comfortable to come back & feel welcome
Want the programs we had in past to come back while continue with current programs and events.
The new Sunday School class
New Sunday class is great.
Sunday school Class – young adults just started
Nothing until couple of weeks ago (Sunday School)

What additional things we should do

Give more involvement & responsibilities
Allow them to step up to help and support them
Give them more responsibility
Copy of newsletter
Young people study
Invite them

Starting a family

What we do

Baptism if they so choose
Baptism
Offer nursery
Nursery
Very safe and friendly family environment
Involvement of church, if you want to be
Positive impact on community
Feel very comfortable
Shower – need guidelines

What additional things we should do

Struggle with nursery – not a lot of people working in the nursery even though we put out pleas to volunteer.
Specific people reach out
Always willing to help – being there for people
Need to reach out to families who just drop off and pick up children at Sunday School.
Show them what they are missing out on!!
Card sent to acknowledge it
Gift basket
Sunday School class for kids with young parents
Offer to baby sit
Offer to take food
Take food
Celebrate birth at service
Maybe a baby shower
Used to have showers, when we did have them a friend organized
Baby showers – used to?
Not much conversation
Don't know

School age children

What we do

Sunday School
Sunday School
Sunday School
Sunday School starts at 3
Provide a good base of bible and support
Rally day
Rally Day
Doing things to make it fun for kids – Rally Day
Day
Christmas program
Older kids mentor younger kids
Enter 3rd grade
Confirmation and celebration service
Youth Group
Camps
Other activities

What additional things we should do

Vacation Bible School
Vacation Bible School except this year since 1959
VBS
Bible School
Acknowledge achievements
Making memories
More kid things in newsletter
Offer to help
Support when they are here
Support the kids in school events
Youth group – doing more stuff

Children Graduating

What we do

To see the congregation supports the kids and the parents feel that the kids have an extended family to lean on and support them.
Home grad parties and most of us go to parties
Do a good job of acknowledging them

What additional things we should do

(None mentioned)

Empty nesters

What we do

Social activities are good
Get to know
Here you are never really an empty nester
More freedom
New friendships and social events
Able to do things together outside of church
Always helpful
People are busy
Fellowship committee has activities

What additional things we should do

Don't have a relationship with anyone in this church – would like to
We don't know anyone's interest outside
Directory is ancient – need new one
Faith – Fellowship committee does not do any thing and would like more
Get us active again
Communication a problem
Suggestion – set up couple nights
Provide more time to give back to church – committees, programs, volunteering
Volunteer as much as did before
Couples events
Throw us a party!
Cluster groups

Retired

What we do

See more outdoor activities!!

UMW

More time for church activities

Mail forwarded south

Still have emails and stay in contact

Fits needs well

Friendships

Gives you something for Sundays.

Religion is important.

What additional things we should do

Going out for breakfast

Group socialize

Throw a party

After spouse is lost

What we do

Support groups

Support

Strong fellowship support

Good support – for backing you up and having your back.

Supportive and always there

Watch out for them

Prayer requests

Cards. Flowers

UMW does Love Baskets

Phone calls

A lot of people do thing that we don't know

What additional things we should do

Adult Sunday School use to go caroling to shut-ins & nursing homes.

Take food to them

Weekly coffee groups

Have the ability to provide resources to families i.e. – mowing, means snow...etc.

Help people feel that no one is left alone

Form a group to make sure they know we are here for them.

Grief group

Pastors seem to follow up but not membership

Cards / Stay connected, "not alone"

EXTRA

Additional comments or questions.

Would like to know how many people have joined the church in the last 5 years. How old are they, their kids? How many of those have left?

Don't see how these questions have anything to do with expansion.

If there is a push to add on, will we lose people?

More meetings like this.

Part V – Tabulated Results of Pre-Group Meeting Survey

Prior to meeting in small groups each participant was asked to complete a survey, which were designed to prepare the respondents for the group meetings that followed by asking leading and sometimes extreme questions to stimulate participants to consider different possible positions for some of the topics to be discussed. This survey was not designed to be projectable to the entire congregation. 45 questionnaires were completed and are summarized below.

About how long have you attended Centennial?

<1 year	6.7%
1 - 3	11.1%
4 - 6	13.3%
7 - 12	22.2%
13 - 25	13.3%
26 - 50	24.5%
> 50 years	<u>8.9%</u>
	100.0%

At what stage of your life did you first attend Centennial?

School age or younger	21.4%
Single & out of school	4.8%
Married but no children	7.1%
Married and starting family	4.8%
Child in school	23.8%
Child just out of school	0.0%
Empty nesters	16.7%
Retired	21.4%
Lost spouse	<u>0.0%</u>
	100.0%

Did you attend centennial at the invitation of a friend, relative or neighbor?

Yes	40.0%
No	<u>60.0%</u>
	100.0%

How did you first learn of Centennial?

Spouse	8.8%
Neighbor	8.8%
Friend	20.6%
Other	41.2%
Newspaper	2.9%
Mailing	5.9%
Driving down road	<u>11.8%</u>
	100.0%

Did you know anyone from Centennial before you first attended?

Yes	61.1%
No	<u>38.9%</u>
	100.0%

Have you ever invited someone to attend Centennial?

Yes	93.3%
No	<u>6.7%</u>
	100.0%

Disagree - Agree -- 1 to 7 Scale

(Sorted by Average score, Most Agreement to Least)

Statements	Average	1 or 2	4	6 or 7
My life is better because of church	6.56	0.0%	2.2%	93.3%
Different needs at different stages of life	6.18	2.2%	4.4%	75.6%
Inviting and receptive to new members	5.73	2.2%	17.8%	62.2%
Congregation gets along with each other	5.50	0.0%	20.5%	52.3%
Fills all of my needs	5.30	4.5%	15.9%	47.7%
Larger parking	5.11	8.9%	15.6%	48.9%
Larger fellowship	4.67	13.3%	22.2%	33.3%
People more helpful than programs	4.61	6.8%	40.9%	29.5%
Need to focus much more on community	4.30	9.3%	25.6%	9.3%
Less well known than other area churches	4.02	28.6%	28.6%	23.8%
More for empty nesters and beyond	3.98	8.9%	51.1%	4.4%
More conflicts within our congregation	3.98	16.3%	27.9%	16.3%
Hard time in the future	3.82	28.9%	20.0%	22.2%
One hour gives me all I need	3.69	24.4%	26.7%	17.8%
Full-time or extra pastors	3.63	27.9%	27.9%	11.6%
Larger library	3.24	37.8%	31.1%	8.9%
Building over people	2.98	47.7%	9.1%	4.5%
Periodically think if another church is for me	2.34	68.2%	11.4%	0.0%

Sample Questionnaire

Congregation Group Meetings – November 2013

1. About how long have you attended Centennial?
 - Less than 1 year
 - 1 – 3 years
 - 4 – 6 years
 - 7 – 12 years
 - 13 – 25 years
 - 26 – 50 years
 - More than 50 years

2. At what stage of your life did you first attended Centennial?
 - School age or younger - **(skip to Question #6)**
 - Single and out of school
 - Married but no children
 - Married and starting a family
 - Children were in school
 - Children were just out of school
 - Empty nesters
 - Retired
 - Spouse had passed away

3. Did you first attend Centennial at the invitation of a friend, relative or neighbor?
 - Yes
 - No

4. How did you first learn of Centennial?
 - From your spouse
 - From a neighbor
 - Through a friend or relative
 - Other _____
 - Saw it in the newspaper
 - Received a Centennial mailing
 - Saw Centennial from the road

5. Did you know anyone from Centennial before you first attended?
 - Yes
 - No

6. Have you ever invited someone to attend Centennial?
 - Yes
 - No

7. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. (Circle 1 for completely disagree and 7 for completely agree.)

	Completely Disagree						Completely Agree
At different stages of a person's life, people have different needs from their church.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Centennial is inviting and receptive to new members.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Attending morning worship for one hour gives me all of the support I need from a church.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The people who attend Centennial are more helpful to me than Centennial's programs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Centennial is less well known in the southeastern Polk county area than most other churches.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I believe Centennial fills all of my church needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I periodically think about whether there is another church I should attend instead of Centennial.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I believe Centennial needs a larger space for our library.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I think Centennial will have a hard time having enough members to survive 25 years in the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I think the members of Centennial's congregation get along with each other better than most churches.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I worry sometimes that Centennial's congregation is more interested in the church building than the people in it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I believe Centennial needs to work harder to serve its members in the "empty nesters" and beyond stage of life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I believe Centennial needs to build a larger fellowship area.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I believe Centennial needs either a full-time pastor or an additional part-time pastor to serve special areas of the church such as youth or seniors.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I believe Centennial needs to focus much more on serving the southeastern Polk community.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I believe Centennial needs significantly more parking spaces.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My life is better because I attend church.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I believe there are more conflicts or differences of opinions within our congregation than there use to be.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Thank you for your input and thoughts.
Now please go to your small group for discussion.**