

Multiplying Kingdom Impact Recommendations
 Asbury United Methodist Church – Springfield, Missouri
 Geoff Posegate-Consultant, Jenn Klein-Coach
 21 October, 2019

Background: Asbury UMC decided to enter the Multiplying Kingdom Impact (MKI) consultation through the Missouri Conference of the United Methodist Church. Multiplying Kingdom Impact is a process to assist churches in coming to greater effectiveness in making disciples of Jesus Christ and in multiplying the Kingdom of God in their particular mission fields. In Multiplying Kingdom Impact, a consultant and a coach learn all they can about a church and its mission field, and make recommendations to the church’s pastor and leadership. Through the church leadership, the congregation decides what to do next, based on those recommendations. Part of the consultation process includes one-on-one interviews with staff and key leaders, as well as a focus group of active members. The church also provided statistical data from its ministry over the past five years, engaged in a congregation-wide READINESS 360 survey, received an evaluation from “mystery guest” worshippers, and participated in a Storytelling Workshop to uncover “lived” values of the congregation. All of these factors are reflected in the recommendations below.

INTERVIEW DATE: 12 September, 2019

Process: Geoff Posegate and Jenn Klein spent the day in a number of interviews lasting 30-45 minutes each. The day culminated in a focus group of about fifteen active church members, lasting about 90 minutes.

STORYTELLING WORKSHOP: 30 September, 2019

Process: Jenn Klein led a two hour Workshop of 40 people to tell stories about key markers of Asbury Church’s history, to identify her heroes of faith, and to note special moments when God moved in powerful ways. This process helps to identify how the church has made disciples of Jesus Christ in the past.

MEETING WITH ASBURY MISSION-VISION BOARD: 21 October, 2019.

Process: Jenn Klein and Geoff Posegate shared and discussed Recommendations with the Asbury UMC Mission-Vision Board. The Mission-Vision Board is responsible to choose the recommendations they will make to the entire church.

Summary of Strengths and Challenges:

Top Eight Recurring Strengths

- **Strong Relationships.** The congregation clearly values and practices strong internal relationships. Many people rely on one another for encouragement and strengthening. Within the church circles, your name matters. This is the church’s highest “lived” value.

- **Rallying to Need.** Built on the previous strength, people rally around those in need. Within the church, it is a high value that no one celebrate alone, suffer alone, or journey through a life of faith alone. Church members identified instances of how they have done this in the past, most recently for an individual named Brenda. “Team Brenda” was celebrated and is being considered by another organization in Springfield as a model.
- **A Committed Core of Volunteers.** A consistent group of people have an almost vocational commitment to serving the Body of Christ through Asbury Church. These people can be counted-on, virtually without fail.
- **Energetic Pastoral leadership.** Pastor Erika Gravely brings great enthusiasm and skill to the leadership role at Asbury. She is committed deeply to Asbury fulfilling the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the World.
- **A Good, Well-Maintained Facility.** The building and grounds generally are pleasing and welcoming, inside and out. It is a sound facility from which to base ministry into the mission field.
- **A Strong, Rich History of Transitions.** The church has been through an amazing array of changes throughout its history. These have included relocations, building projects, a name change, mergers, etc. They have demonstrated an impressive level of resilience and purposefulness moving forward.
- **Efforts to Connect with the Community.** The congregation has made sincere and labor-intensive efforts to connect with the community, such as “Trunk-or-Treat” and serving a neighborhood school.
- **Music.** Asbury values high quality and varied music in worship.

Top Six Recurring Challenges

- **Relationship Disconnect Externally.** The congregation has not found a consistent and effective way to extend relationship, which they value so much internally, to unreached people in their mission field who long for it.
- **Need-Meeting Stays Within.** As an extension of the previous, their “rally-around” approach to situations of need within their fellowship does not translate to need-meeting outside of the church that happens through new and continuing relationships.
- **An Atmosphere of Grief and Loss.** There’s a feeling of loss, grief, and/or failure that surfaces in varying ways among many of the Asbury folks. Generally, an outsider gets the sense that they believe their “glory days” are behind them. As a result, they have limited hope for what’s ahead, beyond just survival as a congregation.
- **No Clear Discipleship “On-Ramps” or Pathway.** While newcomers are welcomed, overall, they would find no evident way to begin their walk with Jesus, to grow as Jesus-followers, or to discover their ministry and act on it.
- **Weak/Ineffective Communication.** Staff and leaders put a great deal of effort into communicating both for information flow and for recruitment. However, there is an evident breakdown in communication effectiveness, both internally and into the mission field around Asbury UMC. This heightens the discomfort of the atmosphere of grief and loss identified above.

- **Some Disconnect Between the Church and the Pastor.** Pastor Erika is at a different point than most of the congregation, regarding vision for Asbury's future. While this is needed in leadership to a degree, there is evidence of some distancing that might be working against them. Erika is very task-focused and fast-paced, while the congregation is more relationship-based, and is moving at a somewhat slower pace.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Lead a worship service of Relinquishment and Expectancy.** As individual Jesus-followers and as congregations there are times when our feelings of loss, disappointment, grief, and frustration about the past become a barrier to experiencing God's future. Asbury needs a well-designed and well promoted service of "letting-go" and reconnecting with hope for God to do a new thing. Pastor Erika and a worship team will work with Pastor Jenn Klein, Asbury's MKI coach to develop this. The service will include a visible, tactile way for the congregation to release any shackles the past may still have on them. Jenn Klein will be the speaker at this service.
2. **Celebrate the call to relationship.** Following Jesus Christ ultimately is about relationship: Relationship with God, with each other, with ourselves, and with creation. *Relationship is Asbury's greatest strength.* The ways that this is evident need to be lifted up and celebrated. For four successive Sundays after the Service of Relinquishment and Expectancy, relationship will be visibly highlighted in all worship service. Different people will give testimony to how a relationship or several relationships changed their lives, strengthened their faith, motivated them to serve, etc. These should be well-prepared, succinct accounts of no more than five minutes; given live or video recorded. Pastor Erika or prepared worship leaders should make this link: We have been blessed with faith building relationships in Asbury Church, SO THAT we can share this Christ-centered, life-changing gift with people whom we don't yet know. (MKI Consultant Geoff Posegate will help in the design and execution of these testimonies, if needed.)
3. **Create a Mission and Vision specific to Asbury UMC.** Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world is the overall mission of the Body of Christ. Each church needs its own specific statement of that mission, and a vision for what that will look like when it's carried out. Asbury needs to create a mission and vision. Carrying out the mission then requires a clear, simple, measurable process of team visioning, goal-setting, and assessment. All of this will be accomplished by the leadership participating in a "Four Disciplines of Execution" workshop, based on the book by the same name. This workshop will be conducted by a Four Disciplines certified coach. (List of Missouri coaches is available from the Office of Congregational Excellence.) The following recommendations, or any others to which Asbury Church's leadership might feel led, will be carried out within a "Four Disciplines" format.
4. **Build New Relationships.** Sharing the gift of relationship which we have as Jesus-followers doesn't happen unless we actually practice starting and building new relationships through which we can share it. This requires a prayer posture aimed outside the walls of the church, learning skills necessary to start new relationships, and practicing those skills. Especially for introverted people, starting relationships with persons we

don't know can be very intimidating. However, all things are possible with God, and there are do-able and even energizing ways to begin new relationships and to be open to the possibility that Jesus will be made known in and through them.

- a. **Pray the mission field.** Asbury leadership will prepare for and participate in two afternoon and evening prayer walks of a one-mile radius area around the Asbury facility. In teams of two, they will walk the streets of their mission field, prayerfully asking the following: "God, what are you doing here that you want our church to join? What are you saying to us through our mission field? What do we need to hear? To whom do we need to listen?" (See Sue Nilson Kibbey's Floodgates: Holy Momentum for a Fearless Church, pages 46ff. for specific guidance on prayer walking.) Gather at the end of each of these prayer walks for a debriefing of what everyone experienced. Be ready for however God beckons!
 - b. **Learn how to start new relationships.** Asbury leadership will prepare and promote a church-wide "New Places for New People" workshop. (The workshop is self-contained and available from the Missouri Conference Office of Congregational Excellence.) The workshop takes a maximum of 90 minutes. The workshop's purpose is to teach people how to start new relationships in a comfortable, meaningful way, and then to do relationship building in a practical, encouraged, and accountable way.
 - c. **Start new relationships.** Asbury leadership will create a community aimed event, with a focus on children - along the lines of "Trunk or Treat", "Easter Egg Hunt", etc. that have been done before. However, the goal will not be to increase worship attendance or get children into Sunday School. The goal will be for Asbury people to start relationships with people in their mission field, practicing the skills learned in the "New Places for New People" workshop.
5. **Develop a discipleship pathway.** With the primary goal of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, Asbury needs to have a clear picture of what discipleship looks like, how a person grows in discipleship, and how to make that accessible to those who are new to discipleship. (See the end of this report.) Asbury leadership will read and study together a resource such as Michael Schreiner's and Ken Willard's Stride, and use the principles therein develop a discipleship pathway unique to Asbury.
 6. **Improve communication.** In addition to having a discipleship pathway, the church will need to learn different/more effective ways to communicate this and other important matters of ministry. Those who are responsible for internal and external communication will read together Mark MacDonald's Be Known For Something, and utilize the principles therein.
 7. **Support Pastor Erika.** All of this will involve significant re-alignment in Pastor Erika's time and focus. She will work with her MKI coach, Jenn Klein, to build on her leadership and task strengths, to strengthen her relational skills, to create challenging/reachable personal goals, and to govern time management and life balance.

We commend Asbury's leadership and congregation to a deep, prayer-based discernment of these possibilities. It has been a great blessing to have the opportunity to work with this great church thus far. We thank you.

Geoff Posegate

Jenn Klein

8 Core Disciplines of a Disciple of Jesus Christ

- **WORSHIP** – experiencing God when gathered with other believers and practicing the presence of God through the week as a lifestyle.
- **PRAYER** – a growing relationship with God wherein one talks to and listens to God both alone and with others.
- **SCRIPTURE** – reading and reflecting on Bible passages to know and love God.
- **SERVING** – discovering one's spiritual gifts, personality traits, and passion to help others both spiritually and physically.
- **SABBATH** – intentionally setting aside a day each week to stop, rest, contemplate, and delight.
- **COMMUNITY** – loving one another in a smaller group setting and doing life together.
- **WITNESS** – intentionally cultivating friendships with pre-Christian people and authentically sharing faith.
- **GENEROSITY** – out of gratitude, cheerfully and extravagantly giving time and financial resources to advance Jesus' mission in this world.