

Minutes of April 30th 2017 Strategic Planning Meeting

To help develop a strategic plan to help achieve our vision we need to review our current state. To help start this discussion it is common to conduct a SWOT analysis. This stands for;

Strengths- What are the current strengths of the congregation? What are we good at? What do we want to maintain as we develop

Weaknesses - What our weaknesses? Where do we need to grow to help us achieve our vision? What are the gaps between current reality and our vision?

Opportunities - What opportunities are available to help us grow? Do we have untapped or under-utilized resources? What are interesting trends we should consider as we plan?

Threats - What obstacles do we face? What could threaten our existence or growth?

What follows is an unedited transcription of thoughts and ideas generated from a brainstorming by the 50 members and friends in attendance at the Priority 1 Session on April 30th, 2017. Ideas have not been evaluated or validated. They are listed in no particular order and as they appeared on the flip charts. A “*” indicates number of different times it was mentioned. A “?” means people don’t agree or need more information to understand.

Spiritual Exploration and Learning - Adult

Strengths

- *Soul Matters groups******
- *Small groups ******
- *Ministers are willing and capable of providing good workshops******
- *All members/congregants have/are developing spiritual paths**???*
- *We have several people trained in leading Truth Healing and Reconciliation Guide******
- *We have lay leaders willing to provide and able to offer workshops**?*
- *We have trained OWL leaders*
- *We have strength in numbers??*
- *Chalice lighting and reflections at the beginnings of meetings*
- *Lots of self-organizing groups*
- *Spirituality Group*
- *AHA group*
- *Chalice Circles*
- *Experiences - Blanket Exercise, Sunday Services*
- *Learning Circles*

Weaknesses

- *Inability to organize team to put on adult learning******
- *“Soul Matters” asks for substantial commitment before any experience - recommend “faster session” / exposure or mini sessions ******
- *Not enough programs offered*****
- *Limited time to make accessible for people who have 9-5 M-F jobs******
- *Need downtown space**** need some at church***

- *Newcomers not learning enough about online etc resources and programs***
- *Too much spirituality - offer more non-spiritual groups **???*
- *Do people really like the chalice lighting and reflections at the beginnings of meetings??*

- *No SELA Team - can we do better? No one is looking at the overall needs.*
- *Many groups not feeling connected*
- *Missed opportunities for connections if we don't run adult groups*
- *Limited formal class offerings*

Opportunities

- *Use Zoom or online learning opportunities*****
- *Opportunities through services, workshops etc for people to practice to organize/present*
- *Launch the Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Reflection Guides******
- *Use more of the UUA programs e.g. Tapestry of Faith???*
- *Sunday afternoon group for young adults(meet for potluck)*
- *Non-violent Communication Group - Compassionate Communication**?*
- *Try to be more strategic in program offerings - evaluate every program we offer****
- *Online programs for working families, shut - ins etc... ******
- *Discussion/learning groups 1-2 x per month at some downtown location****

- *Daytime group for retired seniors******
- *Using social media in new ways to support this area\Book Club\”Discussion Topics “on the fly” like Capital on Thursday AM*
- *In depth discussion right after the sermon (10 min)*
- *“Rebuttal” “Rehash” of the sermon or service topic during coffee (under a banner)*
- *Developing online library*
- *Opportunity for outreach work if offered wider??*
- *Don't need a committee, each group organizes itself*
- *Greater Victoria Acting Together (GVAT) opportunity for deep congregational learning******

- *More in depth spiritual exploration e.g. “Building your own theology”*
- *Circle Dinners***?*
- *Buddy Gardens *****?*
- *Training for pastoral care, communicating with those grieving , with mental illness and strains****
- *Training for Depression and Anxiety Support Facilitator ***
- *Programming single adults******

- *Adult OWL program ******
- *Information about Child and Youth OWL program****
- *Administrative supports for Adult education e.g. registration****
- *People like to share a meal and ideas****
- *How will we address our lack of diversity? (diversity of beliefs, racial, ethnic)*

Threats

- *Geography*****?*
- *No SELA chair or Team*
- *Unclear roles between SELA chair and Ministers (Who does what?)*
- *Make offering available to working members too*
- *Lack of intellectual content*
- *Core identity. Who are we if we don't do this?*
- *Space limitations for meetings on Sunday prior and after church. Go to 2 services?*
- *Transportation ******
- *Trying to do too much****

Spiritual Exploration and Learning - Child & Youth

Strengths

- *Strong leadership from DRE******
- *Youth can provide leadership ******

- *UUA curriculum*****
- *Strong kids programs*
- *Lots of young kids here*
- *OWL******
- *Beautiful outdoor setting*
- *Youth participation in wider UU “ cons” in Canada and US*
- *Highly committed staff*
- *Intergenerational*

- *Volunteers*
- *OWL- bonds groups of kids to get them to come back*
- *Parent Circle*
- *Christmas Pageant*
- *Youth led ritual*
- *SRC sharing plate for Youth conferences*
- *Innovative experiments. E.g. Nature and Spirit buddies, response to Children’s Chapel??*

Weaknesses

- *Instructor burnout (so many classes??)******
- *Integrating new kids and youth****
- *Many adult members don’t know what’s happening in SELC-Y****
- *Lack of youth/young adult programming**
- *Location and timing, hard for all to attend****
- *Minimal outreach - look to Christian churches for examples of youth led activities *****
- *We need young adults club*
- *Youth programming/involvement other than Sunday Morning.*
- *Develop skills to handle challenging behaviours in group setting*

- *Programming for youth/young adults to keep them connected*
- *Meaningful involvement of youth in work of the congregation*
- *More welcoming of children and youth in shared areas/events other than story time in service*
- *More support for young families. What do they need? Do we know their needs??*
- *Increase participation/interest in youth choir*
- *Irregular attendance makes planning challenging*
- *Increased understanding of typical child energy/movement*

- *More purposeful space for Sunday SELC-Y programs. Not being chased out early for meetings after service*

- *Listening?*
- *Awareness???*

Opportunities

- *engage youth in congregational decision making*
- *Communicate intergenerational “What are kids doing”******
- *Send “parents” weekly email to all congregants (and they can unsubscribe)*****
- *Smile - get to know the kids*****
- *Find the strength and increase it!*
- *Youth leadership potential******
- *Help grow youth leadership******
- *Consider a more central location for youth programming**
- *Increase opportunities for meaningful connection between youth and congregation*
- *How to do things differently to engage and connect with children, youth and their families - perhaps within our neighbourhood groups*
- *Continuing UU Faith Tradition and FUCV*

- *Increases perspectives. Do young people see this something as an issue*
- *Future growth of FUCV*
- *Greatest impact in teaching in the world*
- *Strengthen youth programming, youth activities that can include their friends i.e. movie nights*
- *Congregation as a whole, more involved in youth programming, more discussions/ involvement around SRC e.g. leadership development engagement***
- *Bus for transportation to/from church**??*
- *Maybe run programs bi-monthly, more of a family event once a month for a longer time period than just the length of service*
- *Intergeneration programs like “HUUgarts” were a good way to create community*
- *Adult congregants should hear from youth/ kids more often about what is engaging/ challenging them*

- *Involve children/youth in annual music service***
- *Intergenerational programs after community dinners******
- *Compassionate communication practice group*

Threats

- *Burn out of instructors******
- *“Busyness” threatens regular attendance - kids get tired if regular commitment with all their other activities******
- *Do people understand curricula offered****
- *We keep trying to include families - their time to participate is low!! (auction, sales, planning events)****
- *Links to demographic challenge of need to engage more young families ******
- *Location is a long distance from young families*
- *Working parents can’t or don’t commit to regular attendance by their kids*
- *Without a wider circle, youth won’t come*
- *Hard to recruit volunteers. They want to go to church too!*
- *Losing the graduates. No next generation*

- *Sleepovers at the church bond the children to each other and the church it-self*
- *Annual check in with kids about what they would like to see more of in their program***

- *We don’t know what our youth/young adults think or want from this community*
- *Disconnect between youth and most of the adult congregation*
- *Competition with other organized/activities e.g. soccer, hockey etc.*
- *Most members don’t know or have any relationship with the children and youth*
- *No pageant last year*
- *Families not controlling children*
- *Different expectation of “acceptable” child behavior (generational difference in parenting)*
- *Sharing space with Montessori and their equipment. Space not conducive to older children and often blocked with equipment that cannot be accessed/ Prevent creation of class specific space*

Pastoral Care

Strengths

- *Neighbourhood groups******
- *Pastoral care and concern committee******
- *Excellent support from ministers and friends in congregation******

Weaknesses

- *Some neighbourhood groups not strong*
- *Lay chaplains are not pastoral care workers*
- *Some neighbourhood groups are so large few people have houses big enough to host the group in which deters participation. As congregation ages physical accessibility to the same house is also an issue for participation****
- *Ministers are too busy to visit the sick and elderly and Care and Concern are not trained professionals?????*** X nope*
- *People who need support have given up waiting for ministers?????****

- *Strength in numbers...there are a lot of us 😊*
- *Members/congregants , many come from background having received extensive training in communications and people interaction/ getting along ****
- *Depression and Anxiety Support Circle*****

- *Communication about our Pastoral Care Program *****?*
- *Depressed people may not reach out for help******
- *Stigma, lack of information regarding mental health****
- *More follow up needed for people that are not well****
- *People falling through the cracks??*
- *More people need to participate in listening*
- *Do we cover all or just the more visible?*

- *What about people who hide their needs*
- *Lay chaplains bookings are down*

- *Are ministers/staff providing enough support to peer support groups*
- *How do committees fit into this*

Opportunities

- *Develop a “reflection guide” (aka curriculum) linking care and concern volunteers with children (and involve the parents) This will hopefully grow more care and concern***
- *Need a chaplain for Care and Concern***
- *Chaplains assume primary responsibility for visiting sick and elderly????*???*
- *Visit offer food to families with new babies or in the midst of other challenges******
- *We all have the opportunity to give and receive pastoral support******
- *Place information and contact information in order of service/e-weekly each week (about pastoral care)******
- *Teaching compassionate communication skills*
- *Build a retirement home??****
- *Encourage congregation to “check in” with one another******

- *Create an every member information canvass focused on care and concern at a different time from the budget campaign****?**
- *Encourage multiage communication*
- *Build stronger networks for folks to ask for help if wanted****
- *Continue sabbatical pastoral care team after ministers return ******
- *Maintain contact with shut ins*
- *How to let congregation know about elders no longer attending*
- *Express need for care and concern people from the pulpit*
- *Developing networks of supports to be more comprehensive*
- *Capitalizing on neighborhood groups, care and concern and spirituality groups*

Threats

- *As population ages more and more need. Do we have capacity? *****?*
- *Lack of communication*
- *Lack of energy/burnout*
- *Reliance on a small number of people*
- *People needing help don't ask for it****
- *We aren't creating a community if we don't care for each other*

- *Reduced access to church for older congregants decrease opportunities for care*
- *Lay chaplain requests are down*
- *Age grouping*?*
- *Better access to Care and Concern help**
- *Believing that we are all inclusive and don't have more work to do****

Worship

Strengths

- *Good accessible music (choir, etc) ******
- *Excellent ministers and lay led services, even in the summer******
- *Lots of congregants at stage in life with where with all and desire to work on/develop spirituality parts******
- *Nice view from windows******
- *Elders**
- *Variety of services (format, topic, theology)*
- *Thinking***
- *Go getters***

- *Access to congregational assets (strengths) ??*
- *Like the circle format*
- *Theme ministry******
- *Worship associates******
- *Aboriginal references**
- *Humour*****
- *spirit leaders challenge us to be our best selves*****
- *Like integration of Buddhist ideas***
- *Cohesive services*

- *Worship associates providing well rounded programs*
- *Services well received*
- *Support for “non -Sunday services” e.g. Solstice, memorials, Christmas Eve etc.*
- *Welcoming visitors during service and offering connection after during coffee*

- *Children there in first part of service*
- *Worship Committee has brought in good speakers*
- *Opportunity for live streaming*

Weaknesses

- *Rigid Christian format??***
- *Need more congregation singing in the service***
- *Lack of forum for feedback??**
- *Lack of forum for discussion after the service*****
- *Lack of diversity of format of service******
- *Hard for introverts to feel connected?**
- *Need more variety in presentation***
- *Narrow demographic diversity**?*
- *Challenging to hear in sanctuary ***
- *Continuity between WA's when shift occurs (forgotten historical experiences) forgot things?**

- *Lack of congregational participation in sermons**????*
- *More opportunity for call and response and responsive readings **
- *Authoritarian layout - rows facing pulpits???**
- *Themes can feel formulaic, tiring by week 4***
- *Themes don't always bring in current events*
- *Some people want to celebrate and not be lectured to (not everyone agrees with this)*
- *Truly intergenerational services. Increase youth participation somehow*
- *Sometimes need more intellectually challenging services*
- *The waste of money and time with the candles every week***
- *Reliability of the live streaming*

- *Find ways to engage the youth/young adults involvement*

- *The sound system!*

Opportunities

- *More lay led services*
- *More use of UVIC interfaith chapel***
- *Improve multi-faith/multigenerational outreach to let our light shine more in the community******
- *Once a month create our services in the circle?

- *Diversity in speakers****
- *Diversity in service formats******
- *Improve accessibility of services to people who can't get to church***
- *More gatherings closer to populations**
- *More online , possible interactive**
- *Use IPADS*??*
- *Continue to seek out interesting speakers, other religious leaders*
- *Continue with Jazz Vespers*
- *Offer pagan rituals e.g. moon, solstice, equinox*
- *Meaningful, authentic involvement children and youth to engage the younger generation*
- *Worship in novel ways*
- *Move to 2 services*
- *Move to a more environmentally responsible and time effective alternative to the candle lighting e.g. the rock in the bowl of water*
- *Improve the reliability and fidelity of the sound system*
- *More information about ridesharing*
- *Affordable membership - I have witnessed one individual who was scared off by discussion during membership orientation?**
- *Free food***
- *Property available?**
- *Members congregants to give/organize services, workshops, practices groups on their specific spiritual affections***
- *Compassionate Communication Practice Groups**
- *More call and response**

- *Could rotate layout of sanctuary throughout the month so that we meet in the round at least once per month*****?*
- *Could increase diversity in order of service (i.e. not always using the protestant model) ******

- *Children's Chapel service in sanctuary with adults (a small number of adults)*

Threats

- *Distance to Drive******
- *"Busyness" ?????******
- *Aging Congregation (not being replaced with young families) ******
- *How to encourage youth involvement as young adults******
- *Too old school religiosity*
- *Being too challenging/daring .Who decides if it's too daring. Could contribute to dissension*

- *Preaching to the choir - telling people what they already know*
- *Do we really know what the congregation wants?*
- *Who decides ritual and tradition at FUCV*

Music

Strengths

- *We love to sing******
- *Lots of choice*****???*
- *Beautiful voices*****
- *Having chamber choir along with non-audition choirs**
- *Love singing hymns*****?*
- *Jazz vespers*****?*
- *Support s congregational singing******
- *Enhances theme of service******
- *Decision to join church can be based on music******
- *Engages a “whack” of people******

- *Creates community within community******
- *When Shana sings in her sermons******
- *Become aware of other congregations???**
- *People join our church by becoming involved in music programs***
- *Variety in congregational songs****
- *Good accessible music selections (to listen to)*
- *Selections identify where we are at spiritually and “belief-wise”*?*
- *Love the choice of songs***
- *We appreciate the variety of songs******

Weaknesses

- *Too many old god words/ hymns**????*
- *No accompanist for Jammers******
- *Takes significant \$ resources? ***
- *Takes time resources? ***
- *Not enough instrumental performances**?*
- *Chamber choir practicing on the same night as chalice choir??**

- *Singing should be a voluntary joyful activity not pressure to perform meaningless archaic hymns *?*
- *More congregational signing in the service???*
- *Sound system need increase u dollars to improve*
- *Such a division of people who appreciate and don’t appreciate hymn signing***

- *Offer alternative music programs e.g. not same old church music but maybe children do a service offering their favorite music*

- *No music program for children or youth*

Opportunities

- *Let's dance!*
- *Learn to read music*??*
- *Different instruments**
- *A sort of outreach****
- *More congregation involvement** e.g. call and response songs, especially while children in sanctuary*****
- *Having a professional director (we have this)*
- *Involve youth to the choose music******
- *Voice alternatives such as chanting , not singing****

- *Cooperate with music training school? ***
- *Make money recording concerts*****
- *Advertise times to join choir****
- *A circular service - with the choir physically in the circle*
- *More simple hymn/songs that congregation can follow/join*
- *Chant more*

Threats

- *Limit the amount of money spent on choirs*?*

- *Do not limit the amount of money spent on it***

- *Too much ritual can constrict creativity***
- *Boring hymns??*
- *Resources spread very thin with so many musical groups??***
- *Costs**?* 😞
- *Do not close any choirs we need all of them*
- *Amount of time commitment for participation?**
- *Many people don't read music and musical score gets in the way of words in hymn book???*

What follows is an unedited transcription of thoughts and ideas generated from a brainstorming by the 50 members and friends in attendance at strategic planning session on April 30th, 2017. Groups were ask to consider ideas to explore to help us achieve Priority 1: Growing in Spirit Through High Quality Programs and Mutual Support

Ideas have not been evaluated of validated. They are listed in no particular order and as they appeared on the flip charts.

What opportunities do you see to explore to help us move toward PRIORITY 1: Growing in Spirit through High Quality Programs and Mutual Support?

- Look at fund allocation of available finds and realign with priorities e.g. not so much money for music and more for youth/adult education. Unitarian club and UVIC, more use of UVIC

interfaith chapel for evening sessions.

- Develop more programs outside W Saanich Property (e.g. Downtown, UVIC etc.) Attract non-members, Capital etc.
- Explore workshops to explore deep thinking about fundamental issues. Could be intergenerational stimulation, culture of connectedness. A community dinner followed by an intergenerational program
- A key component to grow in spirit and meeting objectives is to build a resilient community that really connects with each other and shares a passion in all we do in the church. We need a culture of connectedness.
- Continue Soul Matters and such spirit groups; add post sermons discussions and forums. Intellectually stimulating workshops
- Look at worship space south of McKenzie
- Church work projects as a community
- Congregation learn about OWL program
- Small worship experiences - Pajama breakfast worship
- Music program to encompass all ages
- Messy church/art days
- Contemplation groups
- I would like to develop the skills necessary to share my spirituality with those who might be interested e.g. facilitator training program
- Develop a relationship with downtown church to share resources and facilities
- Lay led courses
- An incubator for helping members/congregants share their particular spiritual /interpersonal interest through services, workshops, practice groups
- Involve myself more in youth programming
- Initiative where people are invited to share their skills
- Work to repair the siloing of youth. Work for more youth engagement as a whole church
- Giving over our sacred sanctuary for other events
- Downtown evening programming to attract working folks and reduce energy consumption of everyone driving to W Saanich Road Site (e.g. Van City venue for free, UVI etc)
- E-programming e.g. Zoom etc.
- CUC common approach - shared national approach “Think local, action Nationally”
- Exchange with downtown church they use our site we use their site
- Share spiritual news with others
- Ask youth what they want
- Use schools at night as alternative venue

- Bring in new members from scattered groups (fellowships)
- Support the music program
- Create the service in a circle
- Change in format of service, new ideas
- Include congregation in musical expressions
- Promote quality in worship through worship program emphasizing what we give to the congregation. Refresh momentum and intensify training like the first group had.
- Open up ways for those who feel they are outside to be heard
- Shuttle bus from Royal Oak exchange
- Add more a variety to services
- Have more opportunity to create meaningful dialogue and feedback around personal challenges in spiritual development; i.e. workshops and groups like soul matters
 - Could be small groups
 - Strengthening neighbourhood groups
 - Weekly lunches
 - Geographical proximity for some
 - Themes a great idea to spark interests
 - Ongoing connections make difference
 - Intergenerational themes
- Make church work for families
- Include congregation more in music activities
- Take part in more music activities and adult program already in place
- We need an alternate space closer to town for evening /Sunday service and spirituality programs during the week
- More use of interfaith chapel
- Encourage more small groups
- Encourage youth to bring friends require smaller time commitment than SOUL MATTERS
- A group for earth based (ecological) spirituality
- A group for PAGANs
- More engagement from the pulpit
- Maybe a shared ministry moment from the pulpit
- More/better communication for expanding/ deepening spiritual growth
- Radical inclusivity
- Explore improved communication network within the congregation /social media? To reach the whole congregation
- How to make C and Cc more exciting so that new people feel more welcomed

- How to purposely include others in wider community to others of diverse race, ethnicity and culture?
- Outreach to those of diverse ethnic, economic and cultural identities for radical inclusivity
- Connect with bands of neighboring nations
- Promote ourselves as a spiritual community rather than a church
- Have a paid SELA leader to facilitate/organize events
- Spiritual book club
- Continue with variety of music/project words on screen
- “privilege walk” (look it up please) and include the public
- We must engage youth and wider demographic communities
- Consider special events for wider community on a themes e..g athletics and justice, aboriginal celebration an feast; multi-faith celebration and discussion
- Broader enhanced music program
- Online education
- More community celebrations
- Reintroduce chalice circles
- Offer adult RE at different locations and times
- Downtown programs
- More joyful music
- Messages from the pulpit advertising youth activities
- Have neighbourhood groups help in the garden
- Make church work for parents so children are able to come and learn
- Develop “sister” relationship with downtown church or Langford or...
- Offer leadership skills training
- Form chalice circles of caring that
- Maintain and devise programs that attract young families and make them known to outside groups
- Encourage small group discussions following service
- More instant and short term opportunities to engage with spiritual theme/discussion e.g. post it note comments
 - What ideas were inspired by today’s homilies and readings
 - 15 min chats after services or a monthly discussion at church on months themes - maybe after 3rd week and incorporate feedback into 4th week service

