



El Dorado County Federated Church Strategic Plan

Holy Conversations Team Findings
& Recommendations

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Holy Conversations Team Findings & Recommendations

INTRODUCTION

The Holy Conversations Team (HCT) was chartered by Federated Church Council in the fall of 2011 to pursue a process of strategic planning. It was understood at the beginning of the process that Federated Church is in a stable phase of life with no obvious problems “to fix”. However, with a desire to continue to thrive while facing a change in pastoral leadership in the near future, Church Council requested that a team be formed to lead the congregation in defining its focus for the next 5 to 10 years.

The work of the HCT involved a continuous feedback process between the congregation and the team. We began by gathering information from the congregation through several exercises, in order to find out what makes Federated Church unique, how the congregation sees itself and its role in the community, and what the congregation’s understanding is of God’s purpose for Federated Church.

The picture that emerged from this information-gathering phase provided the material we needed to create a statement of mission, vision, and core values that will be presented in this report. It is our hope that the Church Council will consider formally adopting these statements and use them as a compass in charting Federated Church’s course.

In addition, we identified 10 “energy centers” or aspects of our life together that indicated a need for deeper investigation. These energy centers either suggested a weakness that needs to be addressed or a strength that may be built upon. The questions raised by these energy centers became the focus of a Constant Contact survey of the congregation. The survey results are central to the recommendations we will make in this report.

Overview of action taken by the HCT

- 1) Conducted SWOT Analyses with 10 ministry teams, active groups and attendees of the Annual Congregation Meeting to determine the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats related to Federated Church.
- 2) Led Church Council and congregation in an exercise based on Acts 1:8 to determine information about the identity of Federated Church, the role of Federated Church in our community, and how we welcome and minister to various groups of people. *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit*

comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

- 3) Tried "Question of the Month" bulletin inserts with minimum success.
- 4) Requested selected members to complete a "Church Planning Inventory" survey to determine relative importance of various aspects of church life.
- 5) Provided large interactive displays to determine the congregation's participation and/or interest in various programs of the church or in the community.
- 6) Conducted community leader interviews to determine the level of knowledge regarding the activity or presence of Federated Church in the community.
- 7) Conducted a round-table discussion of potential church mission statements at the annual Church Retreat.
- 8) As a result of attending a *Catch* seminar sponsored by the California-Nevada United Methodist Conference, obtained demographic data for a 15-mile radius study area around Federated Church to identify ministry opportunities.
- 9) Conducted a Constant Contact survey of the congregation to determine relative importance of various aspects of church life.

The purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to define the identity of Federated Church, and to determine a focus for meeting the needs of the people of Federated Church and the community by identifying objectives, goals, and recommendations to Federated Church Council. We have attempted to take a "frame-bending" approach to our work, going beyond the status quo and bridging the gap between where we are now and the bright future we believe Federated Church is reaching toward.

Guiding Reference:

Rendle, Gil and Alice Mann, Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations. The Alban Institute, 2003.

PART I: DEFINING FEDERATED CHURCH

Who are we?

For the first many months of its existence, the Holy Conversations Team (HCT) was focused on the task of gathering information on who we are as a congregation, and in particular, what makes us unique. Our goal was not only to look at demographic data but to go beyond it to create a picture of the character and heart of the congregation.

This piece of our work draws information primarily from Federated Church demographics gathered by our Constant Contact survey, community demographics gathered by the El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce, our SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis, and our “Jerusalem to the Ends of the Earth” exercise. We also draw, to a lesser extent, on some interactive displays and on interviews with prominent members of our larger community that helped us understand how we are viewed from the outside looking in.

Following is a summary of our findings, a picture created in broad brushstrokes. (More detailed data can be found in the Appendix.)

Demographics—congregation and community

Federated Church is an older congregation in an aging community.

Our children and youth (0-18) constitute 21% of our congregation, based on our recent survey. Our younger adults (ages 19-44) make up just 17%, while our middle aged group (45-64) make up 29% and our seniors (65 and up) constitute 33%.

In the “2010-11 Economic and Demographic Profile” of our county published by the El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce, the 0-19 group in 2010 made up 24.1%, the 20-39 group made up 20.5%, the 40-59 group represented 33.7%, and the 60 and up group was 21.7%.

We can see that Federated Church’s age demographics differ somewhat from the county figures in that the young adult category is somewhat underrepresented at Federated, and the retirement-aged group is somewhat over-represented.

Federated Church is a predominantly white congregation in a predominantly white community.

We did not have to survey our congregation to arrive at the first part of this conclusion—we simply had to look around us on any given Sunday morning. In fact,

we avoided asking questions about race in our recent survey in order to protect the anonymity of responders.

The Chamber of Commerce data showed El Dorado County to be 84% white in 2010, with the second largest group being Hispanic, at 11%. The white percentage of our congregation even exceeds the county figure. As for minority populations, our congregation evidently does not attract a relative proportion of the Hispanic community. Perhaps the reason for this might be a question worthy of exploration.

Federated Church is a highly educated group.

Our recent survey showed that 69% of the adults in our congregation have one or more college degrees (30% have graduate degrees), and an additional 22% have some college, trade or vocational schooling. Countywide, these figures are 26% for college degree(s) and 39% for some college, trade or vocational schooling.

Federated Church is predominantly middle class and either employed or retired.

According to our recent survey, 49% of our congregation's households earn between \$50,000 and \$100,000 annually. Thirty percent fall below this range and 21% fall above it. According to the MissionInsite report generated by the United Methodist Church for our area (within a 15-mile radius of Federated Church), our congregation's households in this range are about 15% greater than those in the larger community. Our congregation's wealthier households making above \$100,000 annually are 11.5% below the figure for our larger community, while our lower income households are just 3.5% below.

Interestingly, the unemployment rate in our congregation is far below the El Dorado County figure. Our survey showed 3% compared with the 16.6% countywide figure.

Federated Church is largely made up of households of married couples without children at home.

Our survey showed that 73% of adults in our congregation are either married or living in a committed relationship. Ten percent are separated or divorced, 8% are single and 8% are widowed.

Forty-five percent of our congregation's households consist of a couple without children at home, while 30% consist of a couple with children. Seventeen percent are single person households, 6% are single parent households with children, and the remaining 2% are roommate situations.

Federated Church draws members from a 15-mile radius.

We had the congregation put markers on a map, and we found that our members come from many directions, with the greatest concentration ranging from Cameron Park to Pollock Pines. Although most fall within 15 miles of the church, there are those who drive much farther.

Self-identity and faith identity

An important part of our task was to uncover how the congregation views itself and its faith. In our SWOT analysis, the congregation used mostly positive language in describing itself: *inclusive, generous, progressive, hospitable, family-oriented, tolerant, open, non-judgmental, loving, active in the community, compassionate and caring.*

In terms of faith identity, 57% of the congregation claimed ties with one of the church's founding denominations—Methodist or Presbyterian. The rest are from a broad range of backgrounds, with Roman Catholics in third place at 9%, and 8% claiming no denominational background. Full details can be found in the survey results found in the Appendix.

Role in the community

Our interviews with community leaders brought mixed reviews. In some circles, Federated Church is well regarded as an active, positive presence in the community. In others, we are virtually unknown. It is evident that we could do a *much* better job at promoting ourselves and our work. (More discussion on the second point will follow.)

There is a third sentiment in our community surrounding Federated Church, and that is one of suspicion or notoriety. Our progressive approach to our faith is a minority position in this community and has put us at odds with some groups. According to the MissionInsite report, 33.1% of people in our study area consider themselves to be “conservative evangelical Christians.”

Internally, our congregation recognizes its community mission and service work as a strong point. Our team used interactive displays to survey the congregation and find out what our involvement is in various community efforts. It is amazing how active this congregation is! Here at home, we offer strong programs open to children in the community—choirs, Kamp Koinonia, Christmas musicals, Federated Preschool, not to mention Sunday School and youth group. Beyond our doors there are numerous mission projects, both local and distant--Upper Room, SHARE, work with the homeless, Hope Community Garden, Sierra School backpack program, CROP Walk, Mexico and Haiti, and much more. Our members are also involved in

just about every outside charitable organization found in our community. Our activism is a very strong part of our congregational identity.

What do we do well?

Our SWOT analysis gave us the congregation's perspective on its own areas of strength. These were the main areas of strength cited:

- Music and educational programs for children and youth
- Dedicated, well-trained staff
- Strong preaching
- Progressive teaching
- Mission and service projects
- Preschool
- Leadership within the congregation
- Weekly communion
- Reputation in the community

What are our weaknesses and opportunities for improvement?

Likewise, the SWOT analysis gave the congregation the opportunity for self-assessment of weaknesses. In many cases, our weaknesses also present opportunities. Here is what they came up with:

- Communication (both internal and external)
- Finances
- Age segregation and congregational split
- Retention of college students and programs for ages 20-30
- Improvements needed on buildings and grounds
- More Bible literacy needed, and additional opportunities for spiritual direction and adult education
- More explanations needed about liturgy and creed
- More coordination needed with other charitable groups to reduce redundancy and work more efficiently
- Worship music (this came up as both a strength and weakness—contention around music is almost a given in churches)
- Opportunities to reach out to minority and marginalized groups in the community

What threats and challenges do we face as a congregation?

Finally, our SWOT analysis identified factors that challenge and even threaten Federated Church. Here are the main points:

- The economy and financial struggle
- Demographics—our congregation is aging
- Negative attitudes in the community toward our openness (sometimes resulting in hostility and vandalism)

- Negative attitudes toward Christianity perpetuated by the media and extreme groups
- Secularization of society
- Work patterns—fewer volunteers are available

Who is our neighbor?

One of the questions the HCT asked the congregation to address was “Who is our neighbor, and how can we better serve our neighbor?” Drawing on Acts 1:8, where the risen Jesus tells his disciples *“You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth,”* both the church Council and congregants were asked to define Jerusalem (members and active participants at Federated Church), Judea (people in the area who are like us, but not participants of Federated Church), Samaria (people in the area who are not like us, who are not participants of Federated Church), and the Ends of the Earth (people far away, or the extremely marginalized with whom we do not come into contact).

Jerusalem – In answer to who we at Federated Church are and what our gifts are, respondents identified answers that closely match the information gathered through the demographic data and other HCT exercises, as addressed above.

Judea – people who are like us with whom we feel comfortable, but who are not yet part of Federated Church – were identified as:

- Unchurched
- Disenfranchised Christians
- Progressives (socially and politically) and social justice groups
- Humanists
- Scientific thinkers
- Service professionals
- LGBTQ community
- Families of children in church choirs, pre-school and Kamp Koinonia
- People who volunteer at community organizations
- Sierra School

Samaria – people who are not like us, with whom we are uncomfortable because we are not sure what to do – were identified as:

- Mexicans and people from other cultures / non-Anglos
- SHARE customers and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds
- People who are homeless
- People who struggle with mental illnesses
- People with disabilities
- Drug addicts/alcoholics
- People in prison/juvenile hall and ex-convicts
- Gang members
- Extremists/fundamentalists and others who are judgmental

Ends of the Earth –people with whom we are not likely to have any direct interaction with – were identified as:

- Our mission partners and people with whom we have a connection, such as in Haiti, Mexico and Africa
- People in developing countries
- Refugees and victims of violence and/or natural disasters
- Extremely disabled
- People with extreme mental disabilities
- Everybody else
- Future generations

One important note is that some people were listed in both Samaria and the Ends of the Earth (homeless, hungry, inmates, people with drug addictions, gang members, shut-ins). This may illustrate the tension between recognizing real limitations and challenging ourselves to reach out more intentionally.

Energy centers and further exploration

From our initial explorations into the identity and role of Federated Church, we uncovered ten different energy centers—identified as strengths, weaknesses, or both—that begged for further exploration. These were areas that came up repeatedly in our discussions and exercises with the congregation:

- Changing Identity and the Role of Denominations
- Communication and Outreach
- Worship Style & Congregational Split
- Music
- Families and Children
- Pastoral Needs
- Adult Education
- Social Needs
- Campus Needs & Priorities
- Finances

We used these energy centers as the focus of our survey of the congregation, the results from which we have formulated our detailed recommendations later in this report. (See “Meeting Needs in the Congregation & Community.”)

PART II: IDENTITY IN ACTION

The first major task of the Holy Conversations Team was to more clearly define the identity of the congregation of Federated Church – our self-identity, understanding of how to be faithful Christian disciples, hopes & dreams, and role within the larger community and the world. We were then commissioned to envision how to support, strengthen, and grow this identity in the next phase of our life together.

The following sheets, *Core Values, Vision & Mission* (Figures 1 & 2), provide a snapshot of who we as a congregation are and hope to be. Federated Church values its historical and current denominational connections with the Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Methodist Church, while also including people from other church and non-church backgrounds. As a congregation, we currently live our faith by: seeking greater understanding of our faith through worship and study together; striving to strengthen our faith through involvement in programs for all ages; and acting out our faith through serving others in our congregation, community, and the world. All that we do as a congregation is connected through our core values.

As mentioned previously, the Holy Conversations Team realized from the start that the strategic planning process was not being driven by any major problems that needed solving. Though there will always be particular areas that we as a congregation need to address and improve on, the general feeling we derived from interactions with the congregation was that people are basically satisfied with how things are. Thus the team decided to adopt the “frame-bending” model for the strategic process. This involves finding ways to push ourselves to a new level of understanding and living out our understanding of what it means to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

Drawing on the findings from the various activities, interactions with congregants, and other data about our congregation and larger community, we propose a direction for Federated Church that honors our congregation’s history and current identity while also pushing ourselves to grow further. This direction can be summed up through identifying where we are (Core Values), where we would like to be (Vision), and how we can get there (Mission).

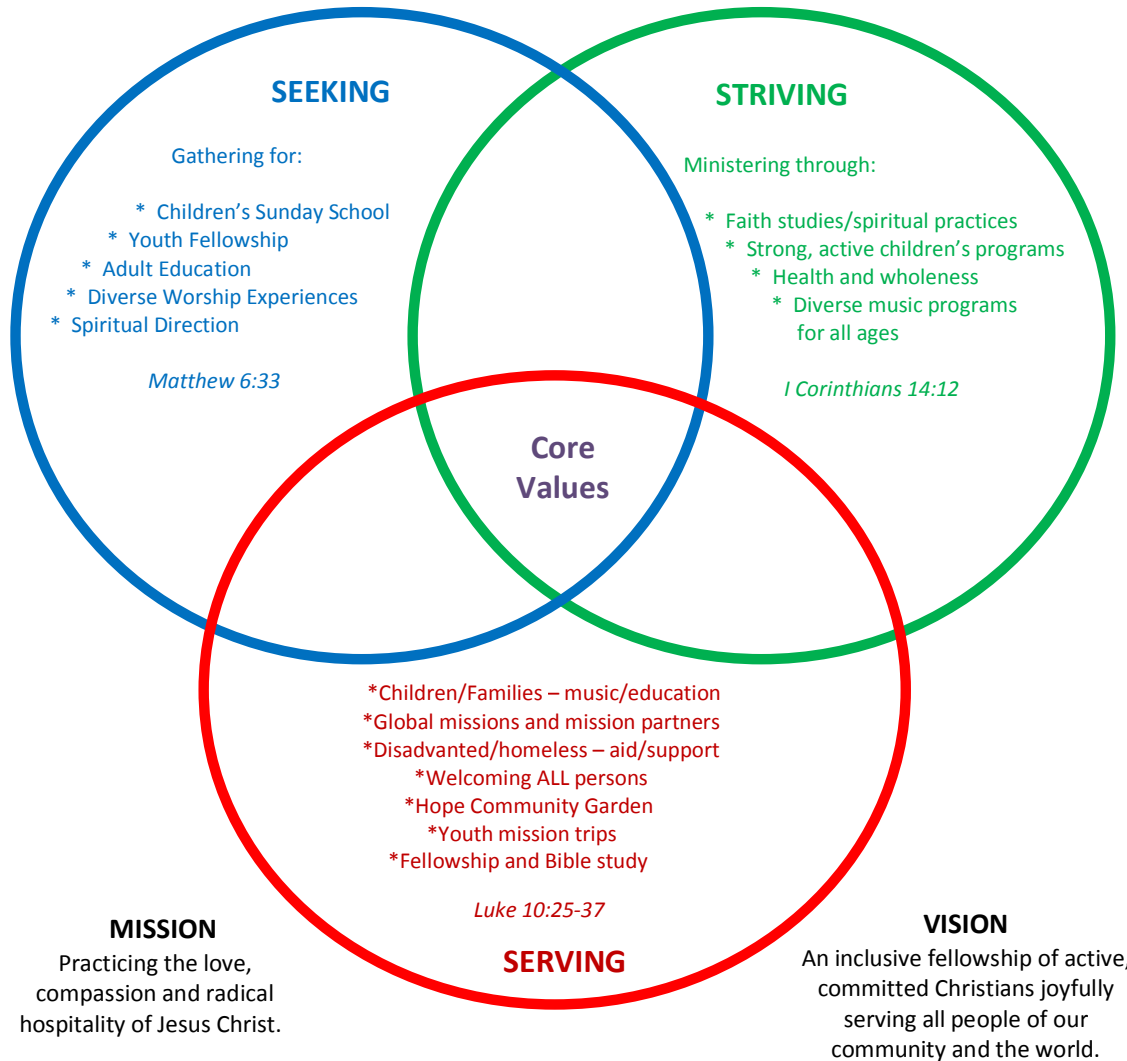
We urge the Church Council to formally adopt the statements of Core Values, Vision and Mission, and incorporate it into website, bulletin covers, and other church literature. Encourage every member to learn the Mission Statement by heart.

Figure 1: Core Values, Vision & Mission



El Dorado County Federated Church

Methodists ~ Presbyterians ~ Everyone



CORE VALUES

We believe that we are called to articulate a progressive perspective of the Christian faith in our community.

*Community Outreach * Openness * Integrity * Social Justice * Family-orientation*



Figure 2: Core Values, Vision & Mission



El Dorado County Federated Church

Methodists ~ Presbyterians ~ Everyone

Mission

Practicing the love, compassion and radical hospitality of Jesus Christ.

Vision

An inclusive fellowship of active, committed Christians joyfully serving all people of our community and the world.

We achieve our mission by:

- ❖ **Seeking (Matthew 6:33)**
Gathering for:
 - Children's Sunday School
 - Youth Fellowship
 - Adult Education
 - Diverse Worship Experiences
 - Spiritual Direction

- ❖ **Striving (1 Corinthians 14:12)**
Ministering through:
 - Faith studies and spiritual practices
 - Strong, active children's programs
 - Health and wholeness
 - Diverse music programs for all ages

- ❖ **Serving (Luke 10:25-37)**
 - Children and families— through music and education
 - Global missions and missionary partners
 - Aid and support of disadvantaged/homeless persons
 - Welcoming persons of any sexual orientation/identity
 - Hope Community Garden
 - Youth mission trips
 - Fellowship and Bible study

Core Values

We believe that we are called to articulate a progressive perspective of the Christian faith in our community.

Community outreach * Openness * Integrity * Social Justice * Family-orientation



Core Values

We believe that we are called to articulate a progressive perspective of the Christian faith in our community.

The core values of the congregation were clear and consistent in our findings for Federated Church. We have listed five key values of Community Outreach, Openness, Integrity, Social Justice, and Family-orientation. Others could also join the list, such as Peacemaking. The findings also clearly pointed to Federated Church's unique role within the community as a congregation with a *progressive* Christian perspective. We feel that it is time for Federated Church to embrace this identity and clearly give voice to this understanding of how to live as faithful followers of Jesus and his message.

What is "Progressive Christianity?"

Progressive Christianity refers to an ecumenical movement that embraces diversity and is willing to question conventional understandings of Christianity. It favors living the question over forcing absolute answers. Progressive Christianity emphasizes social justice and care for the poor and marginalized as an expression of Jesus' instruction to "love one another." The core values of Progressive Christianity are summed up in this list produced by The Center for Progressive Christianity:

By calling ourselves progressive Christians, we mean that we are Christians who...

- 1) *Believe that following the path and teachings of Jesus can lead to an awareness and experience of the Sacred and the Oneness and Unity of all life;*
- 2) *Affirm that the teachings of Jesus provide but one of many ways to experience the Sacredness and Oneness of life, and that we can draw from diverse sources of wisdom in our spiritual journey;*
- 3) *Seek community that is inclusive of ALL people, including but not limited to:*
 - *Conventional Christians and questioning skeptics,*
 - *Believers and agnostics,*
 - *Women and men,*
 - *Those of all sexual orientations and gender identities,*
 - *Those of all classes and abilities;*
- 4) *Know that the way we behave towards one another is the fullest expression of what we believe;*
- 5) *Find grace in the search for understanding and believe there is more value in questioning than in absolutes;*
- 6) *Strive for peace and justice among all people;*
- 7) *Strive to protect and restore the integrity of our Earth; and*
- 8) *Commit to a path of life-long learning, compassion, and selfless love.*

"The 8 Points" - ProgressiveChristianity.org

These values closely fit those of Federated Church; by identifying these values as those of the larger movement of Progressive Christianity, Federated Church can draw strength and resources from like-minded congregations and organizations. However, the congregation would need to learn the definition of Progressive Christianity, as our mission statement exercise identified a discomfort with the word *progressive* when people defined this word as meaning *evolving*, or having a *political* meaning. Though it may take some concerted work to educate the congregation regarding Progressive Christianity, embracing this identity will help provide guideposts along our way, as well as point other progressive Christians to our church.

Vision

An inclusive fellowship of active, committed Christians joyfully serving all people of our community and the world.

The *vision* for Federated Church is the big picture view of who we hope our congregation and congregants will become. While we are clearly on the right track, we can see that many people who attend Federated Church come for what the church can offer them, not what they can offer the church and community. We would like to see a shift from an inwardly focused to outwardly focused congregation. We would like to see more deeply committed Christians who lovingly serve others as a regular part of their daily life. And though we stand out as a congregation that is open and accepting, we need to continue to grow in our capacity for compassion and inclusivity.

Mission

Practicing the love, compassion and radical hospitality of Jesus Christ.

After asking for input from congregants and working for quite a while on creating a mission statement to carry us through the next stage of our life together, we realized that the mission statement needed to be short, concise, and memorable – enough so that any member of Federated Church could remember it at a moment's notice. For if the congregation is going to center all that it does on the mission of the church, everyone must be able to memorize and internalize the mission statement.

The first word – *practicing* – recognizes that we are practicing Christians. Paradoxically, it both notes the tension between trying and not yet being where we want to be, while also saying that no matter how proficient we are at fulfilling our mission, we practice daily in order to maintain and increase our proficiency. In addition, it connects with the concept of traditional and historical Christian practices, such as love, compassion, and radical hospitality.

If you were to ask anyone at Federated Church the main message of Christianity, they would probably answer “to love your neighbor as yourself.” Love is at the center of what we value. Yet we do not always push ourselves to greater understandings of how to *meaningfully* love others. Building deeper compassion and empathy to feel the *real* needs and feelings of others is key to loving well. Compassion is also a core piece to practicing radical hospitality.

What is “Radical Hospitality”?

Radical hospitality seeks not only to welcome, but also to fully include everyone into the life of the church, whether they have attended for many years, or only minutes. It attempts to discover and remove any barriers hindering people from setting foot inside the church doors. Rather than focusing on the needs of the regular congregants, it focuses primarily on the needs of the stranger. Radical hospitality is radical in the sense that it goes above and beyond the normal understanding of hospitality. *Radical* is derived from the Latin word *radix*, meaning *root*, as relating to the original, or basic principle; thus radical hospitality also reminds us to return to Jesus’ core teaching of welcoming the stranger and returning hurt and broken people to a place of wholeness and worth within the community. We can learn from Jesus’ ability to truly listen and address the real need of a person according to their situation in life.

Federated Church already has a well-deserved reputation for being open and accepting of diverse views and people. The Neighbors team has very successfully led the congregation through the process of becoming a More Light and Reconciling Ministries Network congregation, welcoming into the body of the church people who have been excluded for too long. Radical hospitality is a continuation and strengthening of this step. The people of Federated Church are very friendly and welcoming; radical hospitality demands more. Rather than being a close-knit family who knows who will be at the table, we will need to learn to invite those outside our immediate circle and comfort zone, as well as learn what nourishes, comforts, and inspires these guests.

Three members of the Holy Conversations team and other Federated Church members attended a Catch seminar, sponsored by the California-Nevada United Methodist Conference. The seminar focused on catching and keeping new members through practicing radical hospitality. It emphasized that radical hospitality cannot be confined to a program or team, but must permeate every aspect of a congregation’s life. The ways of practicing radical hospitality range from making worship more accessible and inclusive (e.g. have the pastor introduce himself weekly; have words and music to songs available for varying degrees of sightedness; print the Lord’s Prayer; provide a variety of worship styles), to actively welcoming new people (rather than spending time talking with friends) and providing programs, activities, and services that meet a range of real interests and needs (e.g. life skills classes; support groups; study series for unchurched but spiritual, thinking

people). The possibilities for practicing radical hospitality are endless. All it takes is focused concern, humility and a willingness to learn, dedication, compassion and love – a very appropriate next step for who we at Federated Church are and would like to become in our congregation, community, and world.

PART III: BRIDGING THE GAP

We now have a clear understanding of who we are as a congregation, along with all of our strengths and weaknesses, and what our mission is. We also have a vision of where we would like to be in the next five to ten years. How, then, can we bridge the gap from where we are now, to where we wish to be?

There are numerous recommendations that the HCT will make in the next section of this report—largely pertaining to the daily business of the church and meeting the needs of the congregation. Simply implementing these recommendations, although important for the continued health of our congregation, is not sufficient for the realization of our vision. If we truly wish to be an inclusive fellowship and extend our reach in the community and world—which we believe is the case—then it is clear that there are two main keys to attaining this vision for Federated Church: *Communication* and *Radical Hospitality*.

The congregation believes that we are called to articulate—and model—a progressive perspective of the Christian faith in our community, and that we are unique in this capacity, within El Dorado County. Lifting our voice in the community so that our song is widely heard, not to mention improving our internal communication, is a crucial step for us at this point. And examining how we can authentically practice radical hospitality so that it permeates all aspects of our congregation’s life and work is equally important.

Before we delve into these two topics, there is another piece of the puzzle that is important to bring into the discussion here: Financial concerns are an ongoing undercurrent in most aspects of church life. *Increases in both membership and tithing are paramount if Federated Church is to survive and continue its work in the long term.* Growth from within will not sustain our church. We propose that focusing on communication and radical hospitality will not only spring us forward to our vision for the future, it will also go a long way to helping ensure a stable financial future for our church.

Communication

Communication came up as one of the biggest energy centers in our discussions and exercises with the congregation. It is broadly felt that this is an area of weakness for Federated Church. However, sometimes our weaknesses also present our biggest opportunities.

Our first formal recommendation is for the formation of a Communications Team to handle publicity, marketing and communication. The term “marketing” might make some feel slightly uncomfortable; after all, Federated Church is not a business with a product to “sell.” However, it is an apt term when we consider that we have a great deal to offer the community and have historically done a less than satisfactory job of

making this known. Getting the word out about our inclusivity and progressive perspective, our wealth of programs and classes, sermon topics, mission and service projects, health ministry and so forth will draw numerous members of our larger community into our sphere.

Ideally, this Communications Team will include congregants with some expertise in marketing and communications. Computer savvy is a plus, since the work of the team would encompass the website, e-mail campaigns, Internet advertising and social media as well as more traditional media. This team would work closely with the staff and other teams to facilitate efficient communication within the church and between the church and community. This team can perhaps request that Jodie act as their advisor, since she has already spearheaded efforts in improving internal communication. The team would also be responsible for developing a marketing plan and seeing to its implementation.

Here are some specific recommendations for the Communications Team:

Website

- Solicit content for the website from all groups and teams within Federated Church. Continue to improve the website to hold more information describing the uniqueness of Federated Church. Emphasize our mission and core values, including an explanation of *progressive* Christianity.
- Update the website weekly. Keep it user friendly and informative so people from both services can connect through getting the same information. Items to include could be:
 - Upcoming events and worship service topics for Federated Church
 - Upcoming events of interest within the community
 - Prayer requests (while respecting privacy)
 - Blog by the pastor or other person on current events or other relevant topics
 - Address particular topics as they relate to radical hospitality and progressive Christianity
 - Explore how we might make effective use of various social media.
- Optimize the website with key words, such as More Light, Reconciling Ministries Network, progressive, etc. Work on getting good ranking in the search engines. Register the site with relevant online directories.

External Communication

- Identify and utilize local free event listings and community bulletin boards to publicize events, classes, programs and sermon series. Advertise upcoming events and classes that might be of interest to the larger community on the website, in the local paper, with invitations to appropriate groups and individuals, and occasionally with flyers and direct mailings.
- Communicate our mission and core values by the use of media and signage.
- Look into the possibility of more directional signage so that we are more visible and easier to find.
- Host community events that support or promote our mission and core values. Hold joint events and activities with other organizations. Draw on community resources for special events and advertise well. Get coverage of the events by local media.
- Get in the news so people hear about Federated Church. Write articles and give interviews, especially on controversial topics. “There is no such thing as bad press” – as long as we are adhering to our mission and core values.
- Members of Federated Church have been instrumental in forming non-profit groups in the community to provide support and aid for disadvantaged and homeless people in our county. Find ways to continue to connect with other concerned people and organizations in the community through such means as hosting homeless services co-op discussions.
- Publicize opportunities to serve alongside Federated Church people in Haiti, Hope Community Garden, SHARE and other projects.
- Consider a “Getting to Know Federated Church” event, inviting Kamp Koinonia families and other neighbors.
- Consider making Federated Church logo T-shirts. These could have a rainbow of colors to publicize our inclusivity. Optionally, the congregation could get together and colorfully tie-dye them.
- Consider using products with Federated Church’s logo and mission statement, such as coffee mugs or tote bags, as thank-you gifts for visitors.

- Regularly supply the Chamber of Commerce with Federated Church flyers. Explore the potential benefits of Chamber of Commerce membership.

Internal Communication

- Utilize the findings from the communications survey conducted by Jodie et al, to continue improving the lines of communication within Federated Church.
- Explore ways to keep the e-mail list current, and to communicate with members who do not e-mail.
- Consider enhancing the congregational database and mailing list with any available information such as demographics and areas of interest, so that it can be used for more targeted mailings.
- Produce a monthly highlight on a ministry group within Federated Church (A-Z) with opportunities to volunteer in the community advertised in bulletin, announcements, and on website.
- As much as possible, share the same announcements and prayer requests at both services.
- Provide regular and on-going congregational instruction for demonstrating or practicing our mission and core values (including affiliation with More Light and Reconciling Ministries Network) via classes, sermons, videos, and bulletin inserts. Equip our congregants for communicating effectively about our faith, mission, and core values with others.
- Continue to utilize the automated calling system to keep the congregation informed, particularly those without e-mail.

Radical Hospitality

Our efforts in communication will help us reach a broader range of people, as well as improve our cohesiveness and how we function as a group. However, when neighbors and potential new members respond to our efforts in communication and are drawn to set foot on our grounds, our radical hospitality must take over.

Our second recommendation is for the formation of a Radical Hospitality Team. This team would oversee the implementation of radical hospitality practices into all aspects of Federated Church life. One or more of the attendees of the *Catch* seminar

would likely be willing to serve on such a team.¹ Ideally, the team would include representatives from key teams and groups within Federated Church—the Pastoral Team, Worship Team (more on this later), Communications Team, Federated Church Women, Health Ministry, Neighbors Group, etc.

Let us reiterate that radical hospitality cannot be confined to a program or team, but must permeate every aspect of a congregation's life. It requires a shift in attitude. Radical hospitality also focuses primarily on the need of the stranger rather than the regular congregant. This means that from the moment a visitor sets foot on the grounds, they are made to feel comfortable and warmly welcomed—from signage to symbols (such as More Light and Reconciling Ministries Network logos), congregants reaching out with smiles and words of welcome, information being offered or readily available, a seat being offered, prayer and song texts being made available, liturgy and communion practices being explained, and then timely follow-up.

In addition, barriers to participation in worship by everyone must be removed—this means accommodating all manner of potential handicaps, both physical and mental. *What barriers might be holding people back from attending Federated Church?*

Radical hospitality also means knowing who are neighbors are and reaching out to them. If we wish to reach out to the Hispanic community, the homeless community, the GLBTQ community, the college-educated sector of our community, the singles, young families, elderly...then we must identify the specific needs and concerns of these groups and make every effort to address them. The list of neighbors identified in the Jerusalem to the Ends of the Earth exercise provides ideas on whom to consider.

Here are some specific recommendations for the Radical Hospitality Team:

- Welcoming and including
 - Create an information center in the narthex with flyers and information from *all* groups within the church. Have this center staffed on Sunday mornings. The purpose would be to make information and follow-up available in a helpful, friendly and non-pushy way.
 - Expand the training for those serving in a hospitality role (ushers, greeters, etc.) to include recognizing visitors and newcomers, helping them feel welcome and informed, and connecting them with someone

¹ Potential members are Linda Gates, Carolyn Bush and Sara Munday.

who can help them further (e.g. Jodie or Bonnie for a family with children).

- Nurture a church culture where people reach out to those they do not know rather than those they know well already.
 - Quickly connect new people to groups, activities and individuals within Federated Church.
 - Listen to newcomers' feelings, experiences and suggestions.
 - Develop a Welcome Team with a program plan and follow-up for visitors.
- Work with the various groups and teams within Federated Church to create and implement plans to include radical hospitality in all aspects of Federated Church life.
- Hold classes and activities to help the congregation learn about radical hospitality and think about ways we could incorporate it. After gaining a broader understanding of radical hospitality, focus on understanding the unique concerns and challenges of particular groups of people.
- Examples of topics to address could include:
- Accessibility of worship experience
 - Assume everyone is a stranger
 - Have the pastor introduce him/herself and welcome
 - Have music and words to all pieces of the service available, including the Lord's Prayer
 - Explain worship event (liturgy, seasons, prayers, practices, communion process, etc.).
 - Disabilities
 - Mobility issues
 - Sight-impaired
 - Hearing-impaired
 - Mental health and learning disabilities

- Cultural differences
 - Language
- Sexual orientation–continuation of the Neighbors team work in connection with our More Light/Reconciling Ministries Network affiliation
- Homelessness and poverty
- A wide range of family structures, including:
 - Singles, widows/widowers, divorced, separated
 - Single parents
 - Same sex partners
 - Foster families
- Hold *Compassionate/Non-Violent Communication* classes to learn how to interact with those who differ from ourselves with empathy and better understanding.
- Explore what classes, seminars and other programs might be of interest to the neighbors we are striving to welcome. Consider drawing on community resources to make some of these available.

PART IV: MEETING NEEDS IN THE CONGREGATION & COMMUNITY

The following chart (Figure 3) contains our main findings, analysis and recommendations surrounding each “energy center” discussed earlier in this report, with the exception of *communication* which has already been covered in the frame-bending part of our discussion.

These recommendations address the everyday issues and needs of our congregation. While we strive to make leaps and reach our congregation’s vision for the future of Federated Church, it is also important to minister to the daily needs of our membership and make sure that we function as a healthy, cohesive community.

Figure 3

MEETING NEEDS IN THE CONGREGATION & COMMUNITY

FINDINGS BY ENERGY CENTER	ANALYSIS	RECOMMENDATIONS																		
<p>Changing Identity and the Role of Denomination</p> <p>There is a sense of shift in our congregation’s identity and affiliations. With the influx of new members in the past several years, what are our denominational ties, and do these continue to be as important as they have been in the past? Some members sense a move toward a more diverse group in which denomination loses a degree of importance, while others feel that denomination is as important as it ever was. There was sufficient energy around this topic that we felt a need to survey the congregation. According to the survey responses, the composition of denominational backgrounds is as follows:</p> <table data-bbox="128 971 485 1256"> <tr> <td>Presbyterian:</td> <td>33%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Methodist:</td> <td>24%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>None:</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Roman Catholic:</td> <td>9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lutheran:</td> <td>6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Baptist:</td> <td>5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other misc.:</td> <td>5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Episcopal:</td> <td>4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Protestant:</td> <td>4%</td> </tr> </table> <p>When asked how important their congregational ties were to them, our members responded as follows:</p>	Presbyterian:	33%	Methodist:	24%	None:	10%	Roman Catholic:	9%	Lutheran:	6%	Baptist:	5%	Other misc.:	5%	Episcopal:	4%	Other Protestant:	4%	<p>Our interpretation of this data is that the founding denominations (Presbyterian and Methodist) still comprise a majority of our body, at 57%, but that there is a move toward greater diversity.</p> <p>In addition, 71% of our congregation places some degree of importance on their denominational background.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) There is substantial evidence that our members value continued ties with the Presbyterian and United Methodist Churches, and that our denominational practices should be upheld. 2) It is important to recognize and honor our diversity, and to be open to inclusion of other denominational practices in our worship. 3) Since many of our members do not share the denominational backgrounds of the majority, opportunities for helping these members understand our liturgy, practices and beliefs are very important. Explanations by the Pastor during services and offering classes on liturgy and beliefs are two methods to consider. 4) Assess the existing categories of membership in our congregation. Consider whether a non-denominational category of membership should be offered to members from different denominational backgrounds.
Presbyterian:	33%																			
Methodist:	24%																			
None:	10%																			
Roman Catholic:	9%																			
Lutheran:	6%																			
Baptist:	5%																			
Other misc.:	5%																			
Episcopal:	4%																			
Other Protestant:	4%																			

<p>Very important: 23% Somewhat important: 48% Not important: 29%</p>		
<p>Worship Style & Elements</p> <p>When we surveyed the congregation on worship style and preferences, we found that 68% of responders attend the 9:15 contemporary service, 24% attend the 11:00 traditional service, and 8% vary in which service they attend.</p> <p>NOTE: Attendance data collected in 2010 and 2011 shows 62% of congregants attending the 9:15 service and 38% attending the 11:00 service. Therefore, 9:15 service attendees are slightly overrepresented in our survey—possibly due to a greater comfort level with the e-mail survey format among our younger congregants.</p> <p>One concern that came up repeatedly was that the congregation is not cohesive, with a sense of separation between traditional and contemporary services. It was indicated that more opportunities for interaction between the two segments of the congregation would be welcomed.</p> <p>In response to our question about interest in a service with a blend of traditional and contemporary elements, the congregation responded:</p> <p>Yes: 42% Possibly: 36% No: 22%</p> <p>When we questioned families with children in Sunday School whether they would attend the traditional service should child care be offered, the responses were as follows:</p>	<p>Our survey shows that the congregation is more open to a mix of worship styles than we had expected. 78% of responders were open to the idea of a blended service. This is important information for the pastoral/worship team.</p> <p>As for worship times, there is particular interest in the 10:00 Sunday morning time slot which currently splits the difference between the two service times. This begs the question of whether the lower popularity of the 11:00 service is due more to the time slot, rather than to worship style. This may need further investigation.</p> <p>There is also evidently some interest in a Saturday evening service that might be worth exploring.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Although a quarter of our members prefer a purely traditional or contemporary format, there is significant interest in a blended worship style. Consider using the combined summer service as a possible forum for experimentation with the blended concept. 2) Our sanctuary size limits us from combining services on a weekly basis. However, we might explore more opportunities for blended, whole congregation worship in the interest of building cohesion within our congregation. Outdoor spaces and various larger indoor venues can be utilized for occasional combined worship opportunities. Henningsen Lotus Park, Jenkinson Lake, and other local parks make particularly beautiful settings. 3) The number of families interested in child care or Sunday School during the traditional service is insufficient to justify expending the resources on a regular basis. 4) Use the data on service time preferences to assess what is currently offered, revisit the Sunday morning worship times, and explore the possibility of a Saturday evening service. 5) Consider reinstating a Worship Team to help oversee the structure, content and overall cohesiveness of services. Providing this team with tools such as a schedule of readings and sermon topics would allow them to maximize the relevance and cohesiveness of the various worship service elements, such as music selection. Most importantly, having such a team in place would help provide

<p>Yes: 5% Sometimes: 26% No: 68%</p> <p>When surveyed about preference for worship times, the congregation responded as follows:</p> <p>8:00 Sunday morning 7% 9:00 Sunday morning 26% 10:00 Sunday morning 31% 11:00 Sunday morning 11% Saturday evening 14% Sunday evening 8% Weekday evening 3%</p>		<p>continuity when we transition to a new pastor following Andrew's retirement.</p>
<p>Music</p> <p>Although worship music goes hand-in-hand with worship style, it was a significant enough energy center to justify its own discussion. Disagreement over music has been the demise of many congregations. Fortunately, the congregation's response to Federated Church's music ministry was largely positive and supportive.</p> <p>When we polled the congregation on their musical style preferences, many members emphasized their preference for variety, particularly a mix of traditional hymns and contemporary praise songs. Most responders selected several style preferences, and the preferences were weighted as follows:</p> <p>Traditional hymns: 26% Contemporary praise music: 24% Classical sacred works: 21% Multicultural: 15% African-American gospel: 12% Other: 3%</p>	<p>There is a preference for a wide variety of styles and repertoire in our worship music. Music is a hot topic at Federated, and the congregation appreciated having input.</p> <p>The choice of worship music is a delicate balancing act between music and text quality, meaning and theology, relevance, and familiarity. The music staff is doing a great job but will also find this data helpful in moving forward.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The music ministry is on the right track, but provide those involved with the music-related data we collected to help with song selection. 2) Don't be afraid of variety! Many attendees of both services love a good mix of styles. Many in the contemporary service appreciate the traditional hymns; likewise, traditional service attendees are open to an infusion of less traditional genres. 3) Consider having the Celebration Singers work on some Classical sacred repertoire. In addition, we detected an undercurrent of feelings about the Celebration Singers' repertoire; this needs further exploration. 4) The congregation appreciates when new songs are introduced but sometimes needs more assistance in learning them. Suggest that the music staff explore new ways to approach the teaching of new songs. 5) Consider making some up-to-date contemporary music packets available in the narthex for worshippers at the contemporary service, and particularly for visitors who may

<p>There has been some debate about what characteristics are most important in selection of worship music, and so we thought we would find out what the congregation feels. Following is the congregation's ranking of music characteristics from most important to least:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) A singable and compelling melody 2) Meaning and/or theology of the text 3) Ability to stir emotions or heighten feelings of spirituality 4) Beauty and musical interest 5) Relevance to the sermon topic or readings 6) Familiarity 7) Having the music notation available <p>We also gave the congregation the opportunity to make song/hymn requests, and were overwhelmed by the enthusiastic response to this exercise! You will find a compilation of requests in the Addendum.</p>		<p>be unfamiliar with the songs.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6) Alternatively, experiment with projecting scanned images of the musical notation using Power Point, where feasible, during the contemporary service. 7) Suggest that the Praise Team announce the numbers of the songs from the black hymnal when applicable. 8) Give the congregation regular opportunities to make hymn or song requests. A request box in the narthex might be helpful. 9) The children in the contemporary service would enjoy more exposure to the organ. More frequent guest appearances by one of the organists would be wonderful! 10) Consider finding an apprentice organist to help ensure a continuation of Federated Church's organ tradition. 11) Finally, try to find opportunities to educate the children in the use of the Hymnals. They are a valuable part of our church heritage, and many of us have learned to read music through regular exposure to them.
<p>Families and Children</p> <p>According to our survey, children ages 12 and under make up 11% of our congregation, and high school kids (13-18) make up an additional 10%. Therefore, children represent about a 5th of our congregation.</p> <p>The children and youth ministries at Federated Church came up again and again in our discussions with the congregation, and it is clear that these programs are considered a significant strength.</p>	<p>The fact that children and youth make up a fifth of our congregation is a reassuring figure in its implication of continued health and sustainability for our congregation.</p> <p>The strength of our children and youth programs offers a natural opportunity to further grow our congregation—an essential measure for securing a future for Federated Church</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Keep up the good work! 2) Use the strength of our children's programs to promote Federated Church and attract new membership.

Pastoral Needs																																
<p>Although most of our members do not have an ongoing need for pastoral care from day to day, during the valleys of life the need becomes great. When polled about their pastoral needs, 67% of members sited a need for themselves or a family member at some point in time. The types of pastoral care sited are weighted as follows:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Spiritual advisor/counselor:</td> <td>25%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hospital or hospice visits:</td> <td>20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Home visits:</td> <td>9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Communion at home:</td> <td>7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Need for contact with pastor or deacon:</td> <td>5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not applicable:</td> <td>33%</td> </tr> </table> <p>We also polled the congregation about their needs in terms of spiritual health and growth. 87% responded with some need that the church could help them with. The need areas are weighted as follows:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Improve my understanding of, or relationship with God</td> <td>20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Teach me to study scriptures on my own</td> <td>13%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Teach me to pray on my own</td> <td>12%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Help me connect with a small group for study and growth</td> <td>12%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Support me in grief, hardship, or struggle with issues</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Help me connect with new opportunities for service</td> <td>9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Help me to foster spiritual growth in my children/family</td> <td>8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Help me increase my financial generosity</td> <td>2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Nothing further - I have access to all the tools I need</i></td> <td><i>13%</i></td> </tr> </table>	Spiritual advisor/counselor:	25%	Hospital or hospice visits:	20%	Home visits:	9%	Communion at home:	7%	Need for contact with pastor or deacon:	5%	Not applicable:	33%	Improve my understanding of, or relationship with God	20%	Teach me to study scriptures on my own	13%	Teach me to pray on my own	12%	Help me connect with a small group for study and growth	12%	Support me in grief, hardship, or struggle with issues	10%	Help me connect with new opportunities for service	9%	Help me to foster spiritual growth in my children/family	8%	Help me increase my financial generosity	2%	<i>Nothing further - I have access to all the tools I need</i>	<i>13%</i>	<p>There is a need to develop sustainable means for meeting the pastoral needs of the congregation as it grows and changes, and as lay leaders retire.</p> <p>There is also a need for planning for Andrew's eventual retirement. How can we ease this transition and provide continuity?</p> <p>Would a second pastor (full-time or part-time) be the best choice for helping meet pastoral needs, or would someone with different qualifications be a more suitable choice?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Share this data with the pastoral team to aid in allocating of resources. 2) Increase communication between the pastoral team and congregation so that needs are effectively communicated and met. 3) Use this information in the training of deacons and lay leaders, and also in the process of determining staffing needs to accommodate a growing congregation.
Spiritual advisor/counselor:	25%																															
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<p>Adult Education</p> <p>Federated currently offers a wide variety of engaging adult Christian education programs. Because these programs were identified as an energy center, we decided to survey the congregation to see how well needs are being met. Here is what we found.</p> <p>Adult Sunday School is currently offered during the 9:15 service. Consequently, members who attend this service must make a choice between worship service and Sunday School. When questioned about time preference for this program, the responses were as follows:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Before the first service:</td> <td>6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>During the first service:</td> <td>12%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Between services:</td> <td>40%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>During the second service:</td> <td>19%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not applicable:</td> <td>23%</td> </tr> </table> <p>We also surveyed members on which types of adult programs they have the most interest in. The results are weighted as follows:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Contemporary issues:</td> <td>20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bible study:</td> <td>20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Spiritual formation and enrichment:</td> <td>19%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Book study groups:</td> <td>17%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Classes on liturgy, beliefs, etc:</td> <td>12%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Life skills classes (parenting, etc.):</td> <td>8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lay leader training:</td> <td>2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>New member classes:</td> <td>2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Job & resume help:</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> </table> <p>Finally, we surveyed the congregation on preferred times for adult education programs. The most popular choices were weekday evenings and weekdays (at 27% and 24% respectively), and the third most popular choice</p>	Before the first service:	6%	During the first service:	12%	Between services:	40%	During the second service:	19%	Not applicable:	23%	Contemporary issues:	20%	Bible study:	20%	Spiritual formation and enrichment:	19%	Book study groups:	17%	Classes on liturgy, beliefs, etc:	12%	Life skills classes (parenting, etc.):	8%	Lay leader training:	2%	New member classes:	2%	Job & resume help:	1%	<p>Our survey results suggest that an adult Sunday School option that accommodates attendees of both services would be welcome—either in the limited time between services, or repeated during both services.</p> <p>There are already strong programs in place for contemporary issues and spiritual formation, which align with the high level of interest in these two areas. Interestingly, there is also significant interest in Bible study—an area in which there has historically been a gap. We have discovered Bible literacy to be an important issue among our congregants.</p> <p>Although the lay leader training category received a relatively low percentage of interest (2% represents 4 responses), this still indicates that 4 members are willing and interested in being recruited.</p> <p>Furthermore, we feel that the relatively low percentage interested in new member classes is due to the low survey response rate among new members. We have received verbal input that these classes would be enthusiastically received and would help newcomers to integrate.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Share the responses to adult education class types and times with the appropriate personnel. 2) Explore the question of a possible expansion of adult Sunday School to accommodate members from both services. 3) Introduce a trial Bible study class and/or identify curriculum resources for small, independent Bible study groups that might meet in people’s homes. 4) Identify potential lay leaders and follow through with training opportunities. 5) Reinstate new member classes. 6) Consider what types of adult education offerings might draw in young adults. Perhaps an engaging video series with discussion group? Poll this segment of the congregation on appealing topics and formats. 7) Consider how all of our educational offerings might be opened to the larger community and potentially attract new members.
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<p>was Sunday mornings (at 22%). Saturdays and Sunday afternoons received relatively little interest.</p>																
<p>Social Needs</p> <p>The fact that we are such an active, thriving community at Federated Church is a pretty good indicator of our social health as a congregation. However, we wanted to poll the congregation to find out whether social needs are being met and where members' preferences for social activities lie. Here are the weighted results:</p> <table data-bbox="128 584 741 812"> <tr> <td>Church picnic:</td> <td>26%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Game or movie nights:</td> <td>19%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dinner clubs:</td> <td>18%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Family activities/outings:</td> <td>17%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Support groups:</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>After school programs:</td> <td>7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Young adult programs:</td> <td>4%</td> </tr> </table> <p><i>An important note about singles:</i> We received some valuable input that the social life of the congregation is largely focused on couples and families. This leads to a feeling of marginalization among our singles. Although the majority of our congregation's adults are married or in a committed relationship, 26% are single, widowed, separated or divorced. The percentage of single parents is 6%. (Within the larger community, 39% of adults are either single, widowed, separated or divorced, and 23% are single parents.)</p>	Church picnic:	26%	Game or movie nights:	19%	Dinner clubs:	18%	Family activities/outings:	17%	Support groups:	10%	After school programs:	7%	Young adult programs:	4%	<p>There is evidently a fair amount of interest in organized socialization within the congregation, which begs the question of whether the formation of a social team might be beneficial.</p> <p>A comment on programs for young adults (20s): Our survey showed that 6% of our congregation falls within the 19-24 age range, which is understandably low due to many of our young people leaving for college and finding their independence. The question has come up, though, of how we can better retain and support our college and post-college young adults. We currently have little to offer this small but important group. A logical path might be to somehow tie into the youth group program and offer an alumni group, to encourage the continuation of those ties and friendships established during youth group years. Such a program might also provide an opportunity for reaching out to this age group into the larger community.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Share these findings with those involved in social planning for the congregation. 2) Explore the question of whether the formation of a social team might be beneficial. 3) Explore the idea of a youth group alumni group in which our young adults can socialize and support each other. 4) Consider how to shape social activities in such a way that singles feel welcome and included. Also consider a social outlet or group designed specifically for singles. 5) Consider ways in which we can support our single parents. 6) Whole church activities can be a powerful way to bring our congregation together and develop a sense of community. Consider inviting the congregation to participate in campus beautification days, service projects such as planting trees or cleaning up a section of river, participation in service projects sponsored by other organizations, etc. Also invite the larger community! 7) Consider how all of our social offerings might be opened to the larger community and potentially attract new members.
Church picnic:	26%															
Game or movie nights:	19%															
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Young adult programs:	4%															

<p>Campus Needs and Priorities</p> <p>With an aging campus and limited resources, an exploration of improvement priorities was necessary. We asked the congregation to order their priorities, should funding become available. Following is the resulting ranking, with top priority listed first:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) General upgrade 2) Increased accessibility for disabled persons 3) Multi-purpose space that can accommodate the whole congregation 4) Sanctuary expansion or redesign 5) Classroom availability 6) Curb appeal 7) Look at alternatives to the overhead projection system in the sanctuary 	<p>General upgrade, increased accessibility, and a larger multi-purpose space are the “top 3” priorities in allocating funds to buildings and grounds.</p> <p>Other areas are important to select groups within the congregation.</p> <p>Obviously, more urgent repairs surpass these in priority as the needs arise.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Share these findings with those involved in financial planning and facility upkeep. 														
<p>Finances</p> <p>Finances are one of the biggest energy centers of our discussion, as so many of the other topics of discussion intersect with it. We collected information on annual household income and annual church giving, and we will attempt to discuss these here in relationship to age segments within the congregation and levels of annual giving.</p> <p>The household income distribution is as follows:</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%;">Under \$25,000:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$25,000 - 49,999:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">22%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$50,000 - 74,999:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">22%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$75,000 - 99,999:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">27%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$100,000 - 149,999:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">13%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$150,000 - 249,999:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$250,000 or more:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">2%</td> </tr> </table>	Under \$25,000:	8%	\$25,000 - 49,999:	22%	\$50,000 - 74,999:	22%	\$75,000 - 99,999:	27%	\$100,000 - 149,999:	13%	\$150,000 - 249,999:	6%	\$250,000 or more:	2%	<p>We can conclude that our congregation is predominantly middle class, with almost half of incomes falling between \$50,000 and \$100,000. Lower income households making under \$50,000 amount to 30% of our congregation, while 21% of household incomes exceed \$100,000.</p> <p>In looking at age distribution in relation to income level, we find that our lowest income group (under \$25,000) is almost exclusively in the retired, fixed income group. In our second lowest income category (\$25,000 to \$49,999), about half are retired and the other half is distributed across age categories of working adults. Our \$50,000 to \$99,999 category is distributed fairly evenly across all adult age categories. Incomes above \$100,000 are found primarily in the 45-64 age category with a couple of exceptions among retirees.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Share this data with the Stewardship Team, and with those involved with financial planning. 2) Consider using the income data to draw up scenarios for tithing based on percent of income, as a tool for educating the congregation on responsible stewardship. 3) Brainstorm creative ways to spark increased giving, such as “Fund a Need” campaigns (such as a new roof for the sanctuary, or Kamp Koinonia). Members may be more inclined to give to a specific project rather than to general operating. 4) Open opportunities for charitable giving toward a “Fund a Need” or mission project to the larger community! El Dorado County is above average for charitable causes, and with the right marketing or incentive, this could result in a source of income for Federated Church’s various projects.
Under \$25,000:	8%															
\$25,000 - 49,999:	22%															
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\$150,000 - 249,999:	6%															
\$250,000 or more:	2%															

<p>Annual giving distribution is as follows:</p> <table data-bbox="128 207 741 500"> <tr><td>Under \$200:</td><td>10%</td></tr> <tr><td>\$200 - 599:</td><td>22%</td></tr> <tr><td>\$600 - 999:</td><td>7%</td></tr> <tr><td>\$1,000 - 2,499:</td><td>29%</td></tr> <tr><td>\$2,500 - 3,499:</td><td>6%</td></tr> <tr><td>\$3,500 - 4,999:</td><td>9%</td></tr> <tr><td>\$5,000 - \$7,499:</td><td>9%</td></tr> <tr><td>\$7,500 - \$10,000:</td><td>5%</td></tr> <tr><td>Over \$10,000:</td><td>2%</td></tr> </table> <p>Although the congregation recognizes the need for increased annual giving in order to balance the budget, many members object to repeated appeals for money.</p>	Under \$200:	10%	\$200 - 599:	22%	\$600 - 999:	7%	\$1,000 - 2,499:	29%	\$2,500 - 3,499:	6%	\$3,500 - 4,999:	9%	\$5,000 - \$7,499:	9%	\$7,500 - \$10,000:	5%	Over \$10,000:	2%	<p>Where it becomes difficult to find correlations is between annual income and annual giving. Some members the income category \$25,000 and under give a surprisingly large proportion of their modest income to the church, exceeding \$1000 per year. In the groups ranging from \$25,000 to \$100,000 in annual income, the givings are all over the map from under \$200 per year to more than \$5000 per year. In the over \$100,000 income category, givings consistently exceed \$1000 per year.</p> <p>The Stewardship Team does a wonderful job of educating the congregation about what is necessary to keep the church running smoothly. It is clear, however, that a more consistent pattern of giving based on income would insure the church's continued health.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5) Suggest that the Stewardship Team conduct a focused "Talent Drive" to identify the gifts and experiences within the congregation that could contribute to various projects. Making a concerted push for additional volunteer help could potentially reduce some expenditures. 6) Use bulletin inserts to educate members on financial issues ("Cause and Effect") 7) Publish a "Giving Opportunities" brochure.
Under \$200:	10%																			
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PART V: A FEW FINAL THOUGHTS

As this report draws to a close, there are a few points that still merit some mention, although they do not directly pertain to the preceding discussions. These points deal with the *Health and Wellness* of our congregation and the environment in which we live.

Earth Care

The first point relates to following the model of *Progressive Christianity*. The definition we looked at earlier in this report describes the faith practiced by Federated Church in all ways except one—*care for the integrity of the Earth*. Although we talk about caring for the Earth, hear wonderful sermons on the topic and make gestures toward activism in this area, as a congregation we have not yet stepped up to a fully “green” lifestyle.

The HCT feels that if we are to embrace our role as progressive Christians, it is important to examine our practices at Federated Church, assess whether they are truly “green,” and take a look at how we might take a more active role in Earth care in our community. This might involve the formation of a Green Team that would assess our current practices, and then create and implement a green plan for the church. Ideally, a model can be created at Federated Church that our congregants can then take with them into their own homes.

A possible first step is the airing of the documentary, “Bag It,” for the entire congregation. Jodie Regan brought this powerful film to us in an optional Saturday event, and it occurred to those attending the event that it should be mandatory viewing for everyone living in industrialized countries. It would make for a powerful sermon one Sunday, and would spur many of us into action!

Another important piece of care of the Earth would be to explore our role as humans within the complex web of God’s creation. Both postmodern science and eco-theology have been revealing myriad relationships and important interconnections throughout creation. A deeper level of ecological literacy could help us develop a more relevant and relational theology and spirituality of love and care for the entire Earth community, as well as for our own little corner of creation. Church activities that bring us in more direct contact with our own ecological community could help us understand and love it better.

There is a wealth of current and centuries-old spiritual materials that can help us practice healthy relationships with the world in which we live. Having a more grounded appreciation for our role as ecological beings will help ensure the effectiveness of our activism, as well as remind us of the first human’s role to care for God’s garden.

Health Ministry

The Health Ministry has not been discussed in this report for the sole reason that it was not identified as an “energy center.” However, we recognize what a vital program the Health Ministry is at Federated Church and applaud its leaders. It occurred to us that the importance of this program will only increase as our membership, and our community’s population, continue to age. This growing need is only compounded by the increasing cost of healthcare and cuts to essential programs. We encourage you to find ways to continue growing and supporting the Health Ministry in the coming years.

SUMMARY

The Holy Conversations Team would like to thank the Church Council for initiating a strategic planning process, and for giving us the opportunity to contribute to it.

We feel that it was a valuable exercise to focus and articulate the unique identity, mission and vision of Federated Church, and we sincerely hope that the Council will lead the congregation in formally adopting these statements. The Mission, Vision and Core Value Statements, if used to their fullest potential, can provide a reliable compass for charting our congregation's path.

Furthermore, we urge the Council to focus on Communications and Radical Hospitality in all aspects of our congregation's life so that we can successfully attain our vision for Federated Church and, in the process, solve some of our ongoing financial issues and ensure a future for Federated Church.

The recommendations we have presented in Part IV: Meeting Needs in the Congregation and Community should be shared with all teams and individuals involved in the daily operations of Federated Church. This will help ensure that our current membership is being heard and understood, and that we continue to be a healthy and vibrant faith community.

We encourage you to spend some time with the data provided in the Appendix as well; there is a wealth of information there that can be used for a variety of purposes by a variety of teams. If any further clarification is needed, we will be happy to provide it.

We also recommend the creation of an archive to maintain historical records and safeguard important documents, such as this one. In spite of our efforts, the HCT was unable to locate any documentation of the previous strategic planning process.

Finally, we request the Church Council's assistance in closing the feedback process between the HCT and the congregation, by promptly making our findings available to the congregation. We trust the Council, in its wisdom, to find the best method and format for sharing this information.

Blessings,

The Holy Conversations Team:
Carolyn Bush, Linda Gates, John Gray, Sara Munday, Christine Rorden
Advisor: Pastor Andrew Headden

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Core Values, Vision & Mission

Appendix B – Communications Team Recommendations Checklist

Appendix C – Radical Hospitality Team Recommendations Checklist

Appendix D – Congregational Constant Contact Survey Results

Appendix E – Song Requests from Congregational Survey

Appendix F – Demographic Data from MissionInsite Report

Appendix G – Demographic Data from El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce

Appendix H – Location Demographics of Federated Church

Appendix I – SWOT Analyses Results

Appendix J – Acts 1:8 “Jerusalem to the Ends of the Earth” Exercise Results

Appendix K – Interviews with Community Leaders