



GOD'S CALL FOR HOPE SPRINGS:
VISION & PRIORITIES REPORT *for conversation*

SUBMITTED TO: Hope Springs United Church

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Introduction

The following report outlines the vision and priorities of Hope Springs United Church following a season of listening, praying, and discerning God's call for the congregation.

Key Discernment Questions

Remembering our strengths, challenges, questions, dreams and hopes while opening ourselves to God's direction: What is God calling Hope Springs to be and do?

- We long for deeper encounters with God's presence. How do we nurture this? How do we become more comfortable sharing our experiences of faith?
- How do we deepen our ability to be an intergenerational community of belonging for all sorts of people? How do we continue fostering our gentle spirit with one another?
- What needs in our communities is God calling us to see? How do we share & show God's love, mercy & justice beyond Hope Springs?
- And then... How can we use our resources creatively (buildings, property, finances) and how can we support and sustain our paid staff and volunteers to support God's call to Hope Springs?

Our Big Picture Vision Priorities

The RG has listened to the congregation, sorted through its dreams and visions and discerned the following call for the congregation:

- Reimagine worship to democratize the space. Invite people to share stories of faith. Create space for conversation with one another as part of worship. Welcome increased participation.
- Bring fellowship time upstairs to nurture community building and conversation.
- Focus on serving families to offer community in a time of uncertainty & loneliness.
- Hire a minister with a focus on serving families.
- Rebuild the sanctuary to be more flexible and welcoming. Remove pews; add chairs and tables.

Priority 1: Spiritual Formation	Concrete Goals: What concrete goals will animate our priority?	Concrete Steps: What steps are needed to operationalize our concrete goals?	Implications: What do we need to consider?	Details: Who does what by when?
<p>Priority 1: To nourish faith & build connection at a spiritual level.</p> <p>Rationale: We are hungry for it.</p> <p>Anticipated Outcomes: We will become the body of Christ with one another growing together; we will become more comfortable allowing God into the conversation with each other and our neighbours; we will experience authentic spirituality together; we will be and will share the light of God’s presence.</p>	Share congregants’ stories of faith & wonder during the worship service.	<p>Invite people to share – either in person or by pre-recorded video.</p> <p>Appoint a relational person/group to coordinate this item.</p>		•
	Create alternative worship experiences (music-oriented worship in evening, informal gathering, forest church, etc.).	Invite creative minds to brainstorm further on this idea.		•
	Create opportunities for conversation as a part of Sunday worship sometimes with children present.		This is not about creating intellectual discussion time. This is about encountering one another with spiritual conversation.	•
	Democratize worship – include lay people as worship leaders.			•

Priority 2: Community Building	Concrete Goals: What concrete goals will animate our priority?	Concrete Steps: What steps are needed to operationalize our concrete goals?	Organizational Implications: What do we need to consider?	Details: Who does what by when?
<p>Priority 2: To help congregation come together; to know one another.</p> <p>Rationale: Strengthening our community & building relationships helps us be healthier people. We are making God's love tactile.</p> <p>Anticipated Outcomes: We will be more trusting, loving, and approachable. We will learn to forgive and reconcile. We will nurture our calling as a gentle people.</p>	Host fellowship time at the back of the sanctuary.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
	Invite & celebrate the wisdom and experience of elders	Invite elders to nurture & support families.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
	Draw from the diversity of gifts in the congregation.	Develop a list of gifts & skills among congregants.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
	Imagine creative ways to support small groups at HS.	Brainstorm about this idea with the congregation to see what emerges.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
	Be more inventive with building relationships with online, Heritage River and on-site congregation.	Think about interactive technology in new ways. Upgrade our technology. Pay for tech support.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Hope Springs United Church Priorities

Priority 3: Outreach	Concrete Goals: What concrete goals will animate our priority?	Concrete Steps: What steps are needed to operationalize our concrete goals?	Implications: What do we need to consider?	Details: Who does what by when?
<p>Priority 3: To serve young families. To crank up our hospitality in a way that “thins” the walls of our building.</p>	<p>Invest in a paid family & youth minister who focuses on <i>servicing</i> youth & young families.</p>		<p>Given the mental health crisis, this hire is a missional act.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<p>Rationale: Families are burnt out and would benefit from feeling awesome, being loved and cared for.</p>	<p>Support parents & children – in the congregation & in the community.</p>	<p>Consider a meal for families midweek, including those from outside of the church.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<p>Anticipated Outcomes: We will nourish flourishing families supported by intergenerational care; kids will have more caring adults in their lives.</p>	<p>Tell the story of who we are and what we are about in the congregation & in the community.</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Priority 4: Building, Staff & Resources	Concrete Goals: What concrete goals will animate our priority?	Concrete Steps: What steps are needed to operationalize our concrete goals?	Implications: What do we need to consider?	Details: Who does what by when?
<p>Priority 4: To creatively use building, staff and resources to support our vision.</p> <p>Rationale: Reimagining the use of our resources can free energy for new initiatives.</p> <p>Anticipated Outcomes: Our resources will serve a vibrant vision.</p>	Reimagine the worship space.	Take out pews. Put in chairs and some tables.		•
	Imagine ways to bring the community in during the week – not only as rental income but as community outreach & community hub.		As a side-benefit, this can help generate income for the church.	•
	Invest in a paid family & youth minister who focuses on serving youth & young families.		This is the congregation’s first next hire.	•
	Evaluate each space in the building with the mission in mind – we want a space that is “fit for purpose.”		We will want to explore whether we are renovating the church, rebuilding or moving.	•
	Invest in technology.	Upgrade our technology. Pay for tech support.		•

Appendix: Hope Springs Dreams & Ideas

The following list of dreams and ideas was developed by Hope Spring through our visioning process. We plan to keep this list “alive” so we can refer to it along the way. We may draw from this again in the future.

- We long for deeper encounters with God’s presence. How do we nurture this? How do we become more comfortable sharing our experiences of faith?
 - Use the time in January to share stories of faith.
 - Invest in worship and the value of this gathering for our community.
 - There is nature for us.

- How do we deepen our ability to be an intergenerational community of belonging for all sorts of people? How do we continue fostering our gentle spirit with one another?
 - Act to bring the in-person, online and Heritage Village communities together.
 - Invite people to computer screen during coffee after service. Find an interactive way of connecting for those online. Ask choir to wave to camera.
 - Learn about people’s gifts (skills & interests inventory) to support learning about one another and the ways people like to be involved.
 - Enhance communication channels beyond the use of the internet (a phone tree?)
 - Create intergenerational conversation pairs (mentors, buddies?)
 - Be raucous.
 - Invite those without children to lead children’s ministries.
 - Create a social event for young families that includes childcare – this could take the weight off young families.
 - Fuel hospitality by inviting people to bring their coffee into the sanctuary.
 - Host coffee hour upstairs (it is a big step to go downstairs).
 - Gather as a congregation in different venues.
 - Have theme days at church.
 - Create opportunities for discussion groups as part of Sunday morning worship – to take place in the sanctuary. Allow the sermon to lead into these discussion groups.
 - Share with each other what is going on in the 24/7 of our lives so we can better support one another, be authentic with one another and when we show up, serve as we are able (recognising our limits, given what may be happening in our lives).
 - Invest in snack.
 - Create more opportunities for music.
 - Host Sunday music nights or talent shows.
 - Focus family activities on a particular night of the week.

- What needs in our communities is God calling us to see? How do we share & show God’s love, mercy & justice beyond Hope Springs?
 - Continue traditional activities that provide people with an opportunity to serve and that reach out to the community (Fish Fry / bacon on a Bun fundraisers, Mobile Food Rescue); show church in community by meeting needs (fundraisers do not showcase the church enough)
 - Take Hope Springs to the community to meet its needs. Use money to help community.
 - Communicate our theological stance.
 - Host regular events that are “safe entry” and are easy to invite new people to.

- Restart kids' camp in the summer.
 - Be very welcoming. Communicate our commitment to justice.
 - Reach out to non-HS people at Heritage River.
 - Map the "assets" (skills) in the congregation and share these with the community.
- And then... How can we use our resources creatively (buildings, property, finances) and how can we support and sustain our paid staff and volunteers to support God's call to Hope Springs?
 - Lean on congregants from the Alma congregation who have experience with a search process; see the search process as something that can bring the congregation together.
 - Rethink the building space. Do pews and the structure of the space limit the congregation? A smaller space can make us feel more connected. A more versatile space can be good for rentals.
 - Reimagine the sanctuary. Remove some pews or remove pews altogether and add chairs. Put tables at the back of the sanctuary for conversation.
 - Invest in youth ministry position.
 - Leave or renovate building to make space for other groups (low-income housing, not-for-profit office space plus worship space). Use or share facility 7 days/week