

LIFT* (Living into the Future Together) SJU May 23, 2010

In looking at the current state of ministry and mission of St. John United, the Church Council has noted the following:

Positives

continuing constructive, forward looking attitudes among the membership,
strong support for community ministry including the community garden, the soup kitchen, and SHARE
new attenders attracted by our service and community focus
younger generation assuming leadership roles
decent financial resources (endowment, building fund)

"Needs improvement"

declining worship attendance,
members not regular in worship attendance,
offerings down last year
not enough Sunday visitors return

After conversations with Rev. Jerry Buss, Assistant to the Bishop for Evangelical Outreach and Mission, in which he gave us a helpful framework for thinking about congregational revitalization, as well as conversations with members and friends of SJU, the council proposes the following for affirmation by the congregation.

*As members and participants in the St. John United community, we have experienced this congregation as a blessing in our lives and as a means for being a blessing to others. We commit ourselves to strengthening SJU's capacity to **share** this "good news", **involve** more people in the life of our congregation, and to **serve** the mission of God in this place through:*

- lively, participatory, "indigenous" worship;
- growing relationships within our congregation and with members of the wider community; and
- continuing our involvement in serving the needy, caring for creation and advocating for justice

In the coming year (2010-2011) we will focus on 4 areas to improve the balance of these three "legs" and the vitality of SJU.

- 1) Over the summer we will offer a variety of opportunities for conversing about our worship life at SJU and how we can become more "contextual" or "indigenous"; we will also use the summer as a time of some worship experimentation. We will also seek input from others outside SJU to get ideas. We will identify a "revitalizing worship" group to sift through ideas, and develop any proposals for further discussion by council and congregation.
- 2) We will review our program for children, youth and families to identify ways to strengthen our ministries with these groups in our congregation as well as the wider community.
- 3) We will explore ways to better care for members and attendees (including new attendees) of SJU and to build relationships among us including the possibility of reinstating our "shepherd" program and developing more small groups.
- 4) We seek ways to more effectively share the good news we find through this congregation including improving our hospitality with Sunday visitors; exploring ways to communicate more effectively with the wider community through our events, web page, social networking, etc., and practicing sharing our own faith stories

* LIFT is the acronym that the ELCA is using for a new process underway to take a comprehensive look at the future of the ELCA, its synods and congregations and how they interrelate.