

IMAGINE MINISTRY REPORT TO ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Village United Methodist Church

1. What hopes do you have for your congregation in looking at the future in a different way?

Overwhelmingly the first hope from our participants was that we could increase participation and attendance in our church. Many felt that the other problems faced by the church, such as finances professions of faith, etc. could be solved if we were able to get more people to attend and participate in the life of the church.

Our second choice was that we could make a difference in the lives of people we touch but another hope was increasing our ability to recruit and disciple young members.

Changing some of our structure / institution to better serve our congregation is also another hope although some felt that we have already begun addressing this issue. Meeting our budget and paying "our fair share" (apportionments) and raising up a new generation of leaders were also hopes that we felt would be accomplished by achieving our first hope of increasing participation and attendance in our church.

2. What worries do you have for your congregation about this conversation regarding the future?

Our concerns are so inter-linked that we were unable to put them in any numerical order because there was no clear-cut answer. We have a great concern about the aging of our members, the clergy and the lack of children and young people in our church and its services. The decline in our attendance and participation causes a concern for the survival of our church. Each of these concerns affects the other. We are concerned about the low number of baptisms and professions of faith but again this is affected by our other concerns and we agree that more emphasis needs to be placed on confirmations to increase baptisms and professions of faith.

3. What are some ways our local church can act differently to realize the hopes we have for our future?

Again overwhelmingly the participants feel we must present the Gospel of Jesus Christ in fresh and innovative ways. Although some are resistant to change we think we must take advantage of newer technologies and find new ways of reaching people.

Secondly we must strengthen our stewardship finding ways to renew our covenant "faithfully to participate in the ministries of the church by our prayers our presence our gifts and our service". Stewardship is not always financial but many times people think of it as 'just finances'.

Our third response is focusing the work of our church on maturing people in discipleship by providing new and innovative educational opportunities.