

Minute Message

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GO. Focus. Direction. Vision.

BAUMC 26 April 2015

I'm grateful to be with you this morning to share about the Strategic Planning Process the leadership of BAUMC has asked me to facilitate.

Before I get into the details of the STP process, let me tell you a little about me. I just retired from 40 years of pastoral ministry last June. For four years I was your District Superintendent; during that time in ministry I developed a great respect for this congregation and your commitment to mission and ministry. During my pastoral ministry I led several churches. I pastored through a strategic planning process; I also did graduate work in leadership development and strategic planning.

To be honest, I would like to change the term "strategic planning" to "strategic discernment." I believe that our role is to discern what God is doing and what God is calling us to do. We don't have to invent ministry. We are called to faithfully fulfill the ministries to which God has called us. This planning process is really a process of discernment. The we offer our gifts and resources to God, aligning them as the Holy Spirit directs us so that we can be fruitful as we carry on God's work in the world.

To do this we need to establish a plan rooted in the values, vision and mission of this congregation. This plan can bring the congregation together and align the resources and gifts of this congregation, which allows you to move together as one body. This has the greatest influence and impact God makes possible for the Kingdom of God that God.

Part of any good plan is recognizing strengths and weaknesses. This allows us to capitalize on our strengths and effectively manage our weaknesses.

I'm a golfer. I've been playing golf since I was twelve years old. Unfortunately, I never had any lessons when I was young. I developed a lot of bad habits and improper techniques. Now, I occasionally take lessons from a pro. He has developed a plan to help me eliminate my bad habits and technique so that I can become a better golfer.

In the same way, strategic planning helps a congregation both recognize and address their weaknesses and build on their strengths. At the end of the process Bel Air UMC will be even more effective in ministry; everyone in the church will be on the same page and pulling in the same direction. This process can also create a culture of strategic thinking and provide a framework for daily decision making in the future.

During **GO** the team will review the values, vision and mission of the church. These are the foundations of the plan. In addition, small teams are reviewing the current ministries of the congregation, assessing their vitality and relevance for the future. The team will also assess the needs of the community to determine if there are unmet needs that BAUMC has the gifts and ability to meet. The physical structures of the church will be reviewed, identifying short- and long-term building and equipment issues, including needs and potential for renovation or expansion.

You, the congregation, have an important part to play. We will ask you to participate in an on-line survey beginning on May 11th. You will receive instructions for participating in the survey. This will help us assess the spiritual vitality of this congregation. This will be an initial assessment of strengths and areas for development. **This is a key part of GO; we hope that you will take the time and participate in the survey.**

We began **GO** last fall, laying out a time-line and identifying leadership. The team is now very much engaged in the process. Our goal is sharing the plan with the congregation early in the fall. Your new senior pastor will be with you and able to participate in the formulation of the plan. At this point, you can anticipate an opportunity to add your insights and input into the plan before it is finalized and becomes the road map for the future of BAUMC.

There is one more critical component to **GO** - prayer. I said earlier, this is really a process of discernment. As we engage in prayer, we open ourselves to the future that God desires and all that God can do in and through us. Our vision is shaped by God's vision, our plans conform to God's greater plan and our ministries fulfill God's purposes, bearing much fruit and bringing God glory. **We are asking you to commit yourselves to prayer for the congregation, for the leadership and for the GO team that is providing the leadership of the process.**

Thank you! May the Lord be glorified as we commit ourselves to being all that God calls us to be and doing what God has called and gifted us to do.