

CENTRAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH



VISIONING FOR A FAITHFUL FUTURE STRATEGIC PLAN 2013-2020

Approved by Central Christian Church Administrative Board – October 30, 2013

Visioning for a Faithful Future

2013-2020 Strategic Plan

Forward

As we introduce this strategic plan we start by expressing deep-felt gratitude and appreciation for all who participated in the Visioning for a Faithful Future process. Thank you.

As you read this strategic plan, we invite you to do so with an open mind, positive attitude and prayerful demeanor. Central needs your prayers as we move forward into an uncertain future, but a future with great opportunities. As a consequence, the most important future oriented section of this plan is entitled Opportunity Areas Plan. Another critical section which needs your attention is how the implementation of this 2013-2020 plan might proceed. We draw your attention to the Recommendations section of the plan.

To aid you in finding your way around in this document, we provide a table of contents. Using it, you may go directly to the plan sections which most interest you. However, we urge you to carefully read the entire document.

Listening Task Force of
Visioning for a Faithful Future

Visioning for a Faithful Future

2013-2020 Strategic Plan

Table of Contents

Recommendations	1
Values, Vision, Mission, Welcome	3
The Process	5
Our Church	7
• Who Attends Central?	7
• Financial and Attendance Trends	8
Survey Findings.....	13
Opportunity Areas Plan	15
• Meaningful Worship Experience	16
• Strategies for Faith and Spiritual Formation	19
• Stewardship of Time, Talents and Treasures.....	22
• Faith into Action through Outreach	26
• Nurturing Members	31
• Building Community within Central	35
• Attracting New Members	40
• Ensuring Operational Effectiveness	44
Appendix 1: Who Attends Central?.....	48
Appendix 2: Agree/Disagree Survey Questionnaire Responses, 2012 and 2001	52

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following actions are respectfully submitted by the Listening Task Force as steps to be taken in the implementation of this strategic plan.

- The page presenting the **Values, Vision, Mission and the Welcome Statement should be presented throughout our church and to the world as guiding principles** of Central Christian Church as a Disciples of Christ congregation. It should be prominent in locations within our church, on our literature and on our website.

- **A specific group must be designated as the planning oversight body (strategic plan guiding committee) for the delegation of responsibilities within Opportunity Areas and the monitoring of overall progress of the plan.** This body needs to have a significant connection to the Administrative Board and ministerial staff so that it has enough authority to make sure persons to whom the Opportunity Area development and associated goals are delegated make the necessary progress. Without such authority being assigned with the monitoring of designated responsibilities, it is likely that accountability will not properly exist and the goals/ideas generated during the Visioning for a Faithful Future process will wane. This guiding body for delegating action on the Opportunity Areas should have adequate representation and yet be small enough to function effectively. It also should have a membership that provides consistency for the duration of the plan, through 2020. To achieve this, the Listening Task Force suggests the planning oversight body be the Executive Committee of the Administrative Board with the addition of the immediate past Chairperson of the Administrative Board as a voting member. This planning oversight body must:
 - meet at least semiannually to consider verbal updates from those to whom the Opportunity Areas Goal Plans have been delegated,
 - approve additional goal plans developed within the Opportunity Areas,
 - present to the Administrative Board an annual written update of progress in each of the eight Opportunity Areas with measures of:
 - general progress in each Opportunity Area,
 - specific progress in the finalization of each goal plan within each Opportunity Area,
 - development of any additional goals felt important to progress within each Opportunity Area, and
 - the status of implementation of each goal plan including any measurable results of goal action steps.
 - Once the annual report is received by the Administrative Board, the written annual report will be disseminated to the congregation.

- The Opportunity Areas section of the plan presents goals and ideas for each of the eight **Opportunity Areas**:
 - Meaningful Worship Experience – Carolyn Richart
 - Strategies for Faith and Spiritual Formation – Kathy Schaefer
 - Stewardship of Time, Talents and Treasures – Harry Richart
 - Faith into Action through Outreach – John Zink
 - Nurturing Members – John Zink
 - Building Community within Central – Paul Warner
 - Attracting New Members – Hank Sneed
 - Insuring Operational Effectiveness – Kathy Schaefer

The facilitator for each area is noted after each of the areas listed above. Those working on moving the goals and ideas forward should **contact the respective facilitator if additional information is needed** or questions about intent arise.

- It is the intent of this strategic plan to present the beginning of specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time defined (SMART) goals within each Opportunity Area. This plan and its associated goals must be viewed as a beginning of much that needs to be done. It should be considered a living document which must accommodate changing circumstances as further information is gathered by those implementing the plan. **The goals will need to be further fleshed out and made SMARTer by the ministerial staff and lay leaders to whom the implementation of the plan is delegated** by:
 - clarifying each of the goal statements presented by the focus groups to make the statement increasingly operational and time defined,
 - adding benefits to individuals, Central and the community/world which will help the achievement of the goal become more likely,
 - exploring and identifying added obstacles which may need to be overcome to accomplish goal achievement,
 - determining solutions which will successfully overcome one or more of the discovered obstacles as the goal moves toward achievement,
 - beginning with the action steps identified for each goal, adding additional action steps, putting all action steps in an order for achievement, and setting a date-specific deadline for each action step and consequent goal achievement to become the Action Plan for accomplishing the goal,
 - determining and implementing a method to track and measure progress toward the overall goal achievement, and
 - monitoring of the Goal Plan development and Action Plan progress until the achievement of the goal is declared.
- The **additional ideas presented** by the focus group brainstorming session which are presented at the end of the Goal Plans for each Opportunity Area **should be considered** by the ministerial staff and lay leaders to whom the Opportunity Area is delegated. Additional goals developed from these ideas should be sent to the planning oversight body for review and approval.
- Within six months of the approval of this plan by the Central Christian Church Administrative Board, the planning guidance body should initiate a retreat consisting of the members of the planning guidance body, all ministerial staff and the lay leadership to

whom the Opportunity Areas development has been delegated. The **purpose of this retreat will be to work on further fleshing out goals and ideas within each Opportunity Area in order to effectively operationalize the strategic plan.**

- During the retreat or in separate development sessions shortly after delegation of strategic plan responsibilities, **those tasked with further developing the goal plans within each Opportunity Area must attend educational sessions** discussing the importance and methodology for making goals SMARTer by developing a detailed Action Plan. This education will focus on setting, prioritizing and coordinating concrete action steps and sub-steps which will move Central toward goal achievement and measurement of that progress.

VALUES – VISION - MISSION - WELCOME

The following page of this strategic plan presents a document which describes the Values, Vision, Mission and Welcoming foundation of Central Christian Church. The values present who we are and how we should strive to act as a body of Christ. The vision is a statement of how Central Christian Church sees itself as a community of faith. The mission offers the framework within which our actions will take place. The Welcome Statement, written by the Elders, presents our openness to the world as we perform our mission to reach our vision. The following page of this strategic plan should be located front and center in our website and throughout our church as a guiding document.

**Central Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
Founded in 1816 and Continuing Its Ministry in Lexington, Kentucky
Declare this to be a Statement of Who We are and What We are About**

Central Christian Church holds the following values as important in giving us direction in who we are and how we act:

Values important to WHO we are:

Faithful
Inclusive
Loving
Community
Transforming

Values representing HOW we strive to act with:

Compassion
Integrity
Love
Open-mindedness
Wisdom

Our Vision is that as a Church

We are growing as a diverse and welcoming community that confesses Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and proclaim him Lord and Savior of the World.¹

Our Mission as a Church

We affirm, as a welcoming community of faith, that God is revealed in Jesus of Nazareth and that we are united with him in the grace of God's Spirit and declare our mission is:

- to be in communion at the Lord's Table and with the church universal,
- to engage in thoughtful reflection on scripture and our understanding of the faith,
- to celebrate the worth, dignity and gifts of all persons,
- to share God's love with others,
- to seek hope, peace, justice and unity, and
- to live out our faith in Christ's service to all.

As Part of Our Vision and Mission We Issue:

A warm welcome to everyone! At Central Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), we believe God's love is expansive and unconditional and through Jesus Christ God has called us to love one another as God loves us. We welcome believers who seek to journey in faith with Jesus Christ and questioners who have doubts or do not believe. At Central, we honor other holy histories and traditions as we celebrate the worth, dignity, and gifts of every person as a child of God. We welcome all persons into membership who seek to follow Jesus Christ regardless of previous religious affiliation, mode of baptism, gender, race, ethnic background, age, sexual orientation, economic circumstance, family configuration, or ability. Welcome!

A Statement from the Elders of Central Christian Church – 2010

¹ Partially derived from the Preamble to The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.

THE PROCESS

In the summer of 2012 the Senior Minister and the Chair of the Administrative Board made the determination that it was time for Central Christian Church to prepare a Vision Plan which would lead the congregation in the coming years through 2020. John Zink was appointed Chair and a committee was chosen with an eye toward diversity and openness to ideas and change. The visioning process became known as Visioning for a Faithful Future and the committee decided to call itself a Listening Task Force rather than a Steering Committee because it was felt of utmost importance that the congregation lead this process by being heard rather than being “steered”.

The first task was to consider a recommendation which would be taken to the congregation for approval of what our Values/Vision/Mission would be in the coming years. The Task Force identified Values important to both who we are and how we strive to act. This informed and led the Task Force as it developed the Vision and Mission statements. The Listening Task Force recognized that the Elders’ Welcome Statement reflected many of the values identified by the Task Force and so it often served as a polar star in its work. An initial draft of the Values/Vision/Mission was shared with those who attended the focus groups where Task Force members listened to comments and recommendations of participants. After many iterations, the final Values/Vision/Mission statements were developed and can be found “front and center” in the plan immediately preceding this section.

The Listening Task Force met many times from late summer 2012 through spring 2013 prior to asking members of the congregation to meet in focus groups in May and June. The Task Force worked on multiple tracks to lay the groundwork for the Visioning for a Faithful Future process and development of this plan. In an effort to take a strategic approach in developing the plan, the Task Force used a SWOT approach, a well-known strategic planning process. SWOT is an acronym from the first letters of the words Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. This method of strategic planning involves examining the strengths and weakness within an organization along with opportunities and threats in the environment external to that organization. Once these are identified, it is normal to consider how organizational strengths might be used to minimize internal weakness, moderate threats and take advantage of opportunities.

As the Listening Task Force considered Central’s internal strengths and weaknesses, trends in giving and attendance were examined. For concerns about trends within our church, please see the Our Church section of this strategic plan. The Task Force identified strengths and weaknesses of Central by considering progress made on earlier plans. The past two strategic plans (*Central 2000, prepared in 1993* and *Vision 2020, prepared in 2001*) were reviewed for indicators of both success and lack of success in implementing the ideas set forth in those plans. Task Force members interviewed select people who worked closely in the ministry areas designated in the plan written in 2001 to determine the progress made developing strengths and residual weaknesses. In addition, church members were asked to give their opinions of strengths and weaknesses in an extensive survey completed by 315 persons in December 2012. (See also the plan section entitled Survey Findings.) The resultant data were returned to the Listening Task Force who then compiled results and developed areas of opportunity for growing Central in

the future. For further consideration the Task Force formulated eight Opportunity Areas to include perceived weaknesses to be overcome and strengths with which Central could continue to flourish. From the above research, a narrative statement was developed for each of the eight Opportunity Areas. These narratives, made available to the congregation, summarized: Central's Strengths, Weaknesses, Ministries or Programs Most Important to the Individual, New Programs or Services, and Possible Programs or Services to Eliminate.

To consider external threats and opportunities, each member of the Task Force read various articles and books concerning the challenges and opportunities churches are facing today. Readings were shared with one another and staff frequently offered important research for this part of the process. Many reasons were discovered for why people are leaving churches and are identifying themselves as spiritual, but not religious (<http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2013/01/14/169164840/losing-our-religion-the-growth-of-the-nones>). Understanding these trends informed what needed to be discussed in planned focus groups.

Reasons people are leaving "organized religion" and churches include:

- religion being identified with socially conservative political positions while especially the younger generation (millennial generation) are not as socially conservative (<http://www.npr.org/2013/01/15/169342349/more-young-people-are-moving-away-from-religion-but-why>),
- churches talking the talk about meeting the needs of their members but not walking the walk of doing so (<http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2013/01/18/169646736/as-social-issues-drive-young-from-church-leaders-try-to-keep-them>), and
- an increasingly shallow presentation of religious theology (http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2013/07/27/why-millennials-are-leaving-the-church/?hpt=hp_c4).

However, there seems to be an increasing trend back to churches which

- provide a depth of theology and the more "high church traditions" (http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2013/07/27/why-millennials-are-leaving-the-church/?hpt=hp_c4),
- tradition, community and support networks (<http://www.npr.org/2013/01/17/169450811/on-religion-some-young-people-show-both-doubt-and-respect>), and
- are seen as welcoming (<http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2013/01/18/169646736/as-social-issues-drive-young-from-church-leaders-try-to-keep-them>).

The above lists are not all-inclusive so the online URLs of some of the articles are provided for those readers who would like to examine these issues more in-depth on their own.

Focus groups were formed for each of the eight Opportunity Areas with the narrative report used as the starting point of the discussions. Members of Central were highly encouraged to participate in focus group discussions surrounding one or more of the Opportunity Areas. One hundred and thirty-four persons participated in one or more of the eight Opportunity Areas focus groups in the months of May and June of 2013. There were a total of 24 focus group sessions. The initial meeting for each focus group was spent brainstorming ideas. The narratives of

strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified by the Listening Task Force were made available to the focus groups where they were pertinent to the discussion, and further ideas were developed by the focus groups during the brainstorming process. The participants in each group voted on the ideas to narrow them to top ideas to be discussed more in subsequent goal planning. Each focus group then met additional times to prepare a goal plan for each of the top 2 or 3 ideas. The goal plans from each of the eight Opportunity Areas were then forwarded to the Listening Task Force for consideration and integration into this strategic plan document. A subcommittee of the Task Force worked for three months to draft the plan. It was then presented to the Listening Task Force for further review and revision. In the fall of 2013, the Visioning for a Faithful Future Strategic Plan of Central for the period of 2013 to 2020 was then forwarded to the Administrative Board and congregation for review, acceptance and implementation.

We gratefully acknowledge all in the congregation who shared their thoughts and insights by completing the survey form. Special thanks are offered to all who participated in one or more of the eight focus groups. Additionally, members of the staff and congregational leaders shared many articles, web-sites and professional reflections with the Listening Task Force for which we are deeply grateful as they helped ground the work and place it in a broader cultural and theological context. We also recognize the dedicated work of the members of the Listening Task Force who tried to stay true to the mission of listening to the membership and then developing a plan reflective of our community of faith. Those on the Listening Task Force are: John Zink, chairperson; Lynn Gray; Rick Griffith; Ruth Lawton; Caleb Maas; Brock Marrs; Michael Mooty, ex-officio (Senior Minister); Carolyn Richart; Harry Richart, ex-officio (Board Chair); Kathy Schaefer; Hank Sneed; Paul Warner.

OUR CHURCH

Central Christian Church is steeped in history and tradition. This is valued. “Central, like all institutions, is a process in which change and continuity are united.”² Understanding this and respecting the rich history of Central is important. The valued good of the past needs to be retained while Visioning for a Faithful Future. The task force consequently examined our church in both past and present.

Who Attends Central?

Since the church does not routinely collect very much information on the characteristics of attendees, the best information available on the characteristics of the individuals who attend Central Christian Church is that provided by respondents in the survey. There were 315 respondents; therefore not all attendees are represented. However, it does provide a good cross section. The following is a brief summary. More detail can be found in Appendix 1.

- 88% who attend are members.
- 40% have attended Central for 10 years or less, while 41% have attended for more than 20 years.
- 58% are female, 42% are male.

² **History of Central Christian Church, Lexington, Kentucky** by William Clayton Bower ©1962

- 17% are less than 35 years old, 19% are 35-54, 22% are 55-64, 42% are 65 or older (25% are 75 or older).
- 96% are Caucasian, 2% African American, 1% Native American, 1% Multi-racial.
- 17% have a grade or high school education, 37% a college bachelor's degree, 45% an advanced degree.
- 67% are married, 18% single, 9% widowed, 6% separated or divorced.
- 43% are retired, 35% work in managerial or professional positions, 5% clerical, 4% homemaking, 8% student, 4% in other types of positions, 1% unemployed.
- 61% travel 5 miles or less to get to church, 26% travel 6 to 10 miles, 13% travel 11 miles or more.
- 48% are couples, 20% live alone, 25% are couples with a child or children, 3% are single parents with a child or children, 4% have more than 2 generations in the household.
- 24% have a household income of less than \$50,000, 33% have an income of \$50,000-\$99,999, 32% have an income of \$100,000-\$174,999, 11% have an income of \$175,000 or more.
- The average amount given to the church is approximately 5% of income.
- In addition, individuals give almost 4% of their income to other charities.

In 2001 a similar survey was conducted at Central, so it is possible to compare the changes in the makeup of individuals attending Central now compared with eleven years ago. With some exceptions, the respondents in 2012 closely mirror those in the 2001 study. There are more similarities than differences. However, when compared with the 2001 figures, there are some important differences.

The most striking difference is that the congregation is older that it was a decade ago. In 2012, 42% are age 65 or older (compared with 33% in 2001), there are more retired persons now (43% vs. 25%), there are more couples without children in the household (48% vs. 42%), they are better educated (46% vs. 40% with advanced degrees), they make more money (43% vs. 27% making \$100,000 or more) (although this is not adjusted for inflation), they give a greater percentage of their income to the church (30% vs. 22% give 7% or more) and to other charities (18% vs. 9% give 7% or more), and they travel greater distances to attend Central (39% vs. 31% travel 6 miles or more).

Financial and Attendance Trends

In the Survey Findings section immediately following this section of the plan, the strengths and weaknesses found during the 2012 congregational survey are discussed. Early in the Visioning for a Faithful Future process the Listening Task Force visited the past through interviews of those responsible for elements of the 2001 plan and examining church financial and attendance statistics available for years since 1999. The results of these three sources informed the discussions of the 2013 focus groups and their considerations are presented in the Opportunity Areas Plan section of this document.

The financial and attendance statistics allowed the Listening Task Force to identify trends of concern. Table 1 on page 9 presents the results of attendance records and non-capital

Table 1
Schedule of Non-Capital Giving for Calendar Year and Attendance for Calendar Years 2000-2012

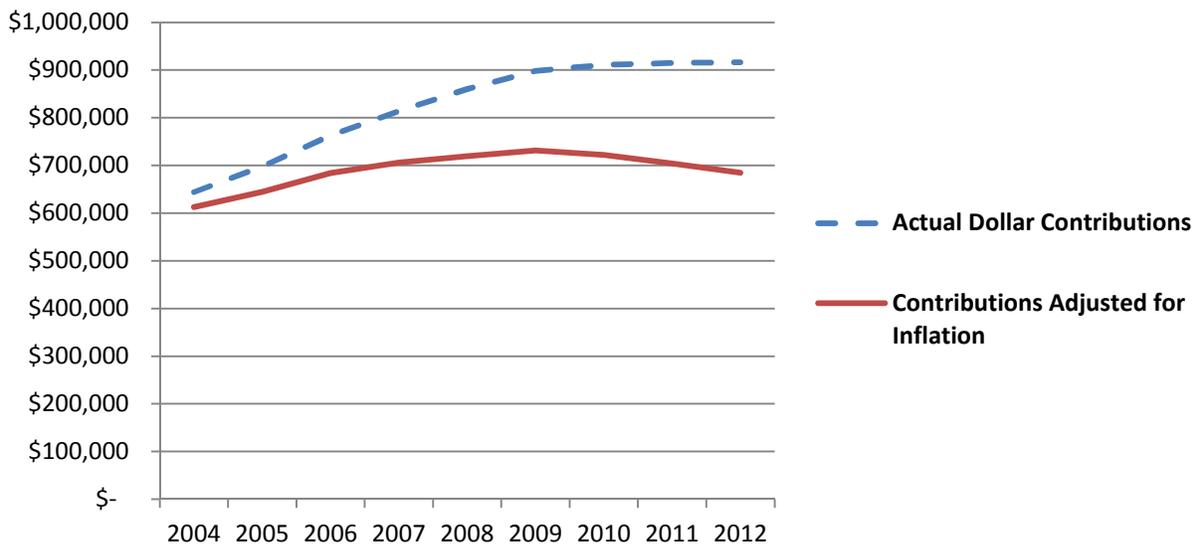
Year	Raw Data			Central Five Year Rolling Average in Dollars				Average Weekly Attendance
	Giving Unit	Amount Given in \$	Inflation Adjusted Amount	Actual Contributions	Contributions Adjusted for Inflation	Contribution Amount per Giving Unit	Inflation Adjusted Amt/Unit	
2000	282	571,500	571,500					411
2001	294	584,165	567,633					416
2002	298	676,649	646,741					424
2003	321	697,776	651,095					428
2004	336	691,260	626,489	644,270	612,692	2,103	2,004	439
2005	358	839,833	732,670	697,937	644,926	2,167	2,008	445
2006	378	907,428	762,240	762,589	683,847	2,250	2,025	437
2007	383	933,094	757,206	813,878	705,940	2,283	1,987	386
2008	402	929,894	718,808	860,302	719,483	2,311	1,939	408
2009	402	882,060	684,831	898,462	731,151	2,338	1,906	409
2010	403	903,715	686,823	911,238	721,982	2,317	1,838	363
2011	397	924,851	673,661	914,723	704,266	2,303	1,774	373
2012	388	940,653	659,774	916,235	684,779	2,301	1,719	326

The year 2000 was used as the base year for the purpose of calculating the inflation adjustment. The inflation adjusted dollars are the equivalent of a dollar today compared to the year 2000. Consequently, the inflation adjusted dollars indicate the trend in purchasing power over the years. The Rolling Average numbers are presented in graphic format in Graphs 1 and 2. The Average Weekly Attendance can be found in graphic format in Graph 3.

giving over the period of the calendar years 2000 through 2012. These statistics start after the 1999 period of data used in Central’s 2001 planning document. There is some concern that the “giving unit” data in the early years of Table 1 are lower than what it really was, but they are the best data available. Consequently, concern about the early years’ data is reduced by using a rolling average of five years of data. The rolling average is started by averaging the first five years. Then, as each new year is added the oldest year is dropped from the calculation. The average rolls forward from the first five years to successive five year averages. The concept of a rolling average is used to present data trends by eliminating annual peaks and valleys commonly observed in annual data. This is demonstrated in Graph 1 which presents a slowing of growth of the rolling average of total non-capital contributions (not including capital contributions for facilities purchase and related debt service) beginning in 2009. It is the dashed line.

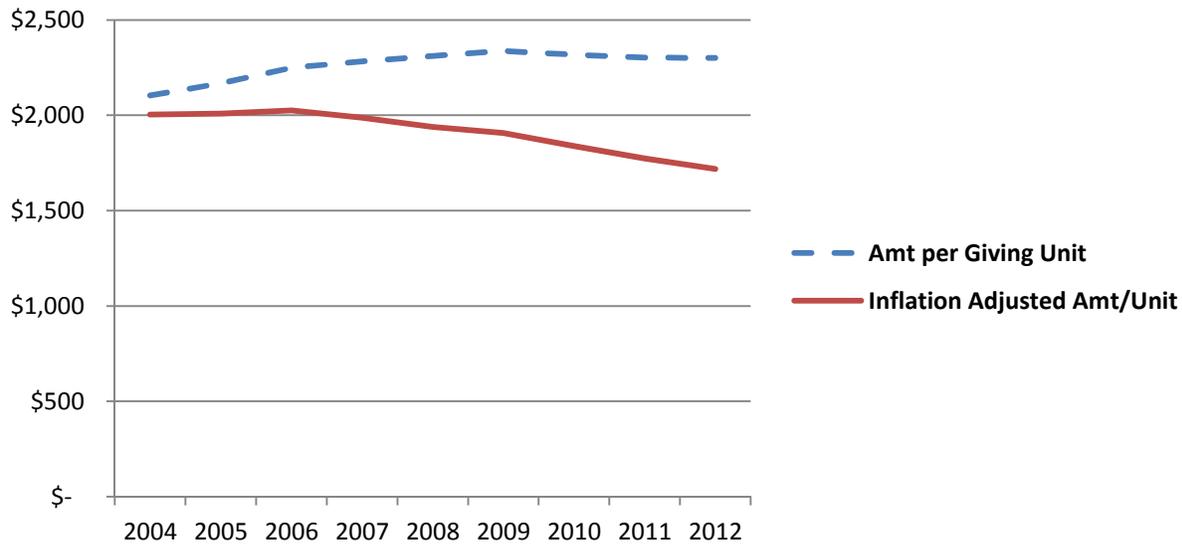
Graph 1 presents the rolling average of inflation adjusted total non-capital contributions in the solid line. It shows a decline since 2009, which indicates a reduction in purchasing power of Central’s non-capital contributions, including the operating budget of the church.

Graph 1 - Rolling Average Trend of Total Non-capital Contributions, 2004-2012



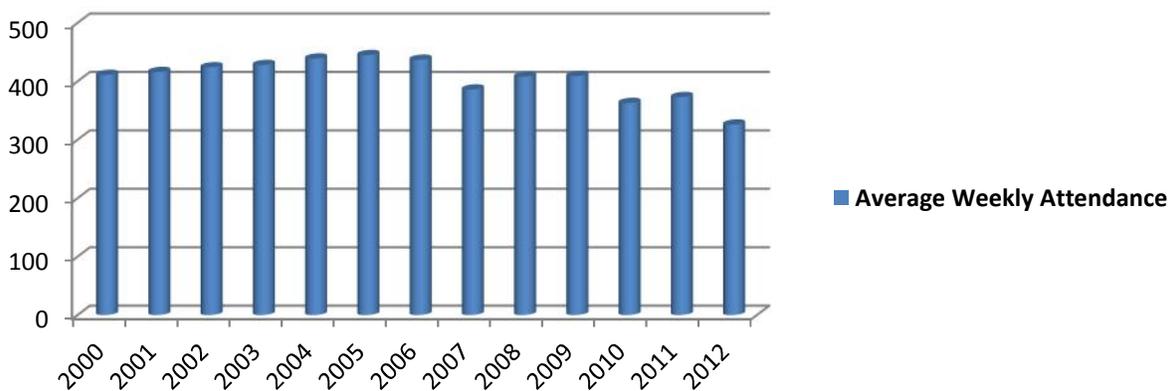
Graph 2 presents a pictorial perspective of Table 1’s rolling average per giving unit which reflects relatively stable per giving unit contributions beginning in 2008, but a decline in purchasing power of the average giving unit’s contribution since 2006. A giving unit is defined as the unduplicated individual or family unit making contributions to Central.

Graph 2 - Rolling Average Trend in Total Non-capital Contributions per Giving Unit, 2004-2012



The trends shown in Table 1 data and reflected in Graphs 1 and 2 proved troubling to the Listening Task Force. The decline of inflation adjusted total contributions after 2009 as represented by the solid line in Graph 1 and the longer period of decline of the inflation adjusted giving per “giving unit” starting in 2006 as shown by the solid line in Graph 2 tell us the purchasing power of Central’s income has been in significant decline. This decline has caused a significant reduction of financial resources available to Central for buying personnel time, goods and services. The number of giving units is stable at best, with an actual decline in the past few years from 403 to 388 (see second column in Table 1). While it may be too soon to tell, the Listening Task Force is concerned this could be the beginning of a significant negative trend. Additionally, Graph 3 shows a significant decline in average weekly attendance which is feared to be a significant downward trend.

Graph 3 - Average Weekly Attendance during Calendar Years 2000-2012



The decline in purchasing power of contributions (inflation adjusted giving), in giving units, and downward trend of average weekly attendance presents a combined concern of trends which must be turned around. The Task Force could only speculate about the reasons for the decline of

non-capital giving beginning in 2008 and the lower growth of the rolling average curve (dashed line of Graph 1). While no one specific cause can be identified, some of the reasons considered were desire to give to the capital campaigns, downturn in the economy, and reduction in the number of giving units.

Recent church facilities additions and improvements followed from the 2001 plan. Central was in the middle of a capital contributions campaign at the beginning and throughout this planning process. Because of that campaign and the issue of both short term and long term debt being reviewed and considered by the Trustees, it was decided that the Visioning for a Faithful Future Listening Task Force would deal with neither the capital budget nor the capital debt. Consequently, other than this paragraph, there is no further discussion of the capital budgeting, capital debt or properties part of Central’s total picture, except for focus group discussions of the use of the existing church facility.

As noted in the Who Attends Central section of this plan, a much larger percentage of our members are retired than in 2001 and our attendees 65 and older has increased. The Listening Task Force’s concern about the aging of Central’s membership/attendees as suggested by the 2012 survey (see also Appendix 1) was reinforced in reading articles about changes in church demographics. Among the articles read by the Listening Task Force were two of particular relevance: a March 2013 article entitled “Younger Donors Propel Fund Raising Increases” in the Chronicle of Philanthropy (<http://philanthropy.com/article/Younger-Donors-Propel-Church/137713/>) and a January 2013 Outreach Magazine article entitled “What Part Do Pastors Play in Congregations” which was excerpted from “Leadership that Fits Your Church: What Kind of Pastor Fits What Kind of Congregation” (<http://www.outreachmagazine.com/features/5169-what-part-do-pastors-play-in-growing-congregations.html?print>). The URL links are provided here for the articles so the reader of this plan may access these articles. Of particular concern was a table in the second publication titled “Age of Worshipers in Growing Stable and Declining Churches.” The table in that article is reproduced as Table 2 of this plan with two added columns (on the right) showing the change in age of Central’s survey respondents’ ages in 2001 and 2012. Over the eleven-year period from 2001 to 2012, Central has moved from a status which might be considered in one of the first two categories (growing or stable) to that categorized as declining.

Table 2
Comparison of the January 2013 Article on Age Grouping in
Churches with Three Different Trends
to Central's Survey Data

Age Group	Article			Central	Central
	Growing (%)	Stable (%)	Declining (%)	2001 (%)	2012 (%)
<25	7	5	7	11	8
25-44	21	21	16	20	17
45-64	40	40	36	36	33
>64	33	35	41	33	42

The trends in the information in this section of the strategic plan are somewhat alarming. It is the opinion of the Listening Task Force that with the implementation of this strategic plan, the trends of concern should be reversible.

SURVEY FINDINGS

In order to collect widespread input concerning the future of Central Christian Church, the Visioning Task Force conducted a survey of the congregation. The questionnaire was completed following both the 8:30 and 11:00 services on two successive Sundays in December, 2012. All present were encouraged to respond, whether they were members or not. In addition, an electronic version of the questionnaire was made available for people who were not in church. In all, 315 individuals completed the survey form. The following is a summary of the findings. The detailed findings of the results of all 42 of the agree/disagree questions can be found in Appendix 2.

Respondents rated 42 items as to whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement provided. The responses were scored on a 5-point scale from Strongly Agree = 5 to Strongly Disagree = 1. There was also a “don’t know/doesn’t apply” response category. The items with the **highest mean scores** are:

1. We have a strong music ministry. (4.73)
2. The worship music is of high quality. (4.71)
3. Central welcomes persons of diverse backgrounds. (4.63)
4. Central’s nursery provides good care for babies. (4.56)
5. Central does a good job ministering to children. (4.55)
6. The worship service uplifts and strengthens me. (4.50)
7. Opportunities are provided to help people in the community. (4.50)
8. Central’s outreach programs provide important services to persons within the community. (4.45)

At the other extreme, those topics that received the **lowest mean scores** (there is less agreement with the statement) were:

1. Central is effectively reaching unchurched persons. (3.21)
2. Sufficient recreational opportunities are provided at Central. (3.34)
3. Everyone at Central is kept informed of what is going on. (3.45)
4. Central’s decision making processes consider all viewpoints. (3.67)
5. Central does a good job ministering to young adults. (3.68)
6. Central resolves conflicts in healthy ways. (3.75)
7. The worship service appeals to all ages. (3.80)
8. Central has goals that guide its future directions. (3.83)

In 2001, a similar survey of the congregation was conducted. Some of the same questions in the earlier survey were repeated verbatim in the 2012 survey. The areas where the greatest improvements were reported were in caring for babies; ministering to children and youth; ministering to women and men; supporting of groups in which people participate; and training

provided for laypersons. The area in which we have seen the greatest decline in the score is in keeping everyone informed of what is going on (lack of communication).

In addition to the agree/disagree questions, also included in the survey were seven questions that asked the respondents to write their answers in their own words. These questions encouraged persons to express their thoughts. This part of the questionnaire asked about Central's greatest strengths; which programs or activities are seen as most important to the respondent; which programs need to be strengthened, reduced or eliminated; suggestions for new programs or services; and why newer members chose Central.

To a great extent, those areas identified as Central's strengths mirror the findings from the agree/disagree questions. Central's strengths are the worship service as reflected in the music program and the quality of sermons, Central's outreach programs, the quality of its ministers, the inclusiveness of the congregation to persons of diverse backgrounds and perspectives, its facilities, and the programs for children and youth.

When the respondents were asked to indicate which programs or activities are most important to them personally, the responses tended to focus on specific programs or activities of the church in which the respondents are most involved. Therefore, in addition to the general topics of the worship service, the music ministry and outreach, the responses mentioned more programs by name. These included such programs as Sunday School classes, KidsCentral, Disciples Women, ChristCare groups, the choir, God's Pantry, Parish Nurses, KidsSing, Room in the Inn, the Thrift Shop, and Stephen Ministry. These and other specific programs are seen as very important to the individuals involved in them.

When asked which areas of the church need to be strengthened or expanded, the two most frequent responses were communication within the congregation and evangelism to increase the membership. Other frequently mentioned topics were: expanding our offerings for young adults, increasing the number of classes and participation in adult Sunday School, expanding the youth ministry, and providing more fellowship opportunities. Very few suggestions were offered for program reduction or elimination. The one issue that was identified was whether Central is overstaffed for its current membership.

Persons who joined Central in the past ten years were asked to indicate why they chose Central as their church home. The most frequent reasons given were: the worship service, a welcoming congregation, openness to all people, the music, the influence of a specific staff member, a Disciples of Christ congregation, family or friends at Central, outreach programs, theology, and downtown location.

OPPORTUNITY AREAS PLAN

Introduction

This section of the strategic plan focuses on the future. It is broken into eight sections identified as Opportunity Areas. As noted in the Process section of this plan, the Listening Task Force identified these Opportunity Areas as areas in which our church needs to focus its attention

between the writing of this strategic plan document and the end of 2020. It is believed that significant progress can be made in each of these eight areas.

The format of what follows includes a brief introduction of some strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats pertaining to each of the eight Opportunity Areas. It also summarizes the general discussion of the focus group in each Opportunity Area, followed by specific goal plans for each Opportunity Area. The goal plans and related ideas for future consideration were derived from multiple focus group meetings in the months of May and June, 2013. These meetings were facilitated by members of the Listening Task Force and were designed to gather as many ideas as possible from focus group attendees. Those ideas were then narrowed into two or three specific goal plans recommended by the focus groups' participants as described in the Process section of this strategic plan.

After the top two or three ideas were determined by each focus group, the topics were formed into goal statements, a total of 20 goal statements in all. A list of benefits, obstacles and solutions were identified for each goal. The benefits are important to consider as reasons to help drive the goal achievement. The obstacles are circumstances which may get in the way of goal achievement and the solutions are ideas about how the obstacles may be overcome. One or more of the solutions will be applicable to overcoming one or more of the obstacles presented in each goal plan. Each goal plan culminates in the beginning of an action plan consisting of some action steps to be followed in achieving the goal. An action plan was begun for each goal, but purposefully not completed so as to leave room for further development of the plan by those to whom the goal may be delegated for further development and implementation. That development will include adding action steps, putting the steps in a progressive and logical order to be achieved and specifying deadlines for each step. Monitoring and measurement of the progress of action steps goal completion will help make sure the goal plan is achieved.

At the end of each Opportunity Area is a list of other issues raised by the focus groups which were NOT part of the recommended goals or their action steps. These ideas are presented to assure we retain for further consideration the many good ideas generated during the brainstorming sessions. Each of these ideas may be helpful in the identification of additional goals. Or, the ideas may be fruitful ground to be used by staff and lay leaders in considering future growth and development.

The eight Opportunity Area discussions, goals and ideas are what immediately follow this introduction.

Meaningful Worship Experience

The worship experience at Central is considered by the vast majority of our congregation to be of the highest quality and offers all who come a time and place to worship in a traditional and thoughtful manner. Many positive comments were made in both the survey responses and in the focus group meeting about the strength of our music program, preaching, prayers, the Lord's Table and the components of the Sunday worship service. As we plan for future commitments there should be given a continued high priority in allocating and distributing human and financial resources to the worship experience. The focus group strongly stated that though these individual pieces of worship are important, our purpose is to worship God as a community and

not to be entertained. These pieces merely open our hearts, minds and souls to the experience of worship and are tools that should help and not impede our worshipful experience.

A question that continues to surface is, “What is meaningful worship?” Below is a synopsis of the focus group’s conversation. While the question could be answered differently by most everyone, the common threads we agreed on as a group were:

Meaningful Worship:

- Helps generate within us the presence of God in our lives
- Offers a time and place to honor God
- Is done in community and we become a community
- Is a time to be filled and then go to serve
- Must touch mind, spirit and emotions
- Helps us “Love God with our hearts, minds, and souls”
- Helps us understand our sacred texts and how they apply to our lives

This is not meant to be all inclusive, but it was important that we at least begin to define the elements of meaningful worship experience as we worked toward our goals. It is recommended that whoever is assigned responsibility for finishing the goals for this Opportunity Area give further thought to the definition of meaningful worship.

Worship Goal #1:

Offer a variety of meaningful worship experiences honoring God and meeting the needs of persons across age demographics (yet consistent with theological perspectives of our church).

Discussion:

There is consensus that our traditional form of worship is deeply meaningful to the vast majority of our congregation, yet the group had a long discussion about other less traditional means of worship - be it Taize, Healing, Contemporary, or other options. The group thought it would be wise to intentionally consider a variety of worship experiences.

Benefits of offering a variety of meaningful worship experiences include

To us as individuals:

- Be a spiritually integrated human
- Experience connection with God and the community
- Be fed and nourished in order to go and be the hands and feet of Christ
- Provide options of connecting to God

To our church:

- More energy
- More opportunity to serve more people
- More opportunity to be served
- Potentially reach more people

To our community/world:

- More people touched
- More service
- More love

Obstacles which might attempt to prevent this goal's achievement:

1. Grouches
2. Lack of money
3. Prejudice toward other forms of worship
4. Apathy or lack of commitment
5. Fear
6. Unforeseen circumstances preventing ability to attract proper resources

Solutions which may apply to overcoming the obstacles:

- A. Communicate reasons to achieve understanding and transparency
- B. Study about various forms of worship
- C. Be intentional
- D. Constant reassurance we will not lose who we are
- E. Patience
- F. Reallocation of resources
- G. Lay and clergy unified effort
- H. Discuss how different worship forms honor God
- I. Keep open minds
- J. Purposefully approach age demographics for information/needs/wants
- K. Address specific needs of all demographics
- L. Think creatively at all times
- M. Prayer

Action Steps for accomplishing the goal might include:

- Develop a group of interested people who will go to other churches, observe worship and speak with people who attend.
- Use this developed group to study demographic data and worship.
- Consider this group of people becoming the core for a re-constituted Worship Ministry Team.
- Develop curriculum on why we worship, why we worship the way we do, and why any changes are made. Then utilize the ideas in Sunday School classes, bulletins, Chimes, sermons.
- Use the new Worship Ministry Group to move forward on any worship additions or changes.

Worship Goal #2:

Encourage meaningful participation and energy in worship.

Discussion:

Even though our worship services are deeply moving and thoughtful, we understand that constant energy, thought, intentionality and resources must be offered to keep worship dynamic, relevant and transformative. Emphasis is placed on the importance of worship leadership by both clergy and congregational leaders and it is imperative that the church continues to encourage this.

Benefits of encouraging meaningful participation and energy in worship are:

To us as individuals:

- Resonance to job, family, etc.
- A sense that we are engaged in something that is worthwhile
- Empowers the structures of our lives
- Gives meaning to life
- Empowered to be and live better

To us as a church:

- Brings a sense of community to worship
- Translates to more participation in other ministry areas
- Brings depth to worship experience
- Touch more people

To the community/world:

- We would be a beacon of light and hope.
- Known as an alternative to other types of worship styles
- Our message will be clear and known by the community.
- A place of welcome

Obstacles which might attempt to prevent the goal's achievement:

1. Fear of emotion
2. Change is painful and thus resisted.
3. Being clear about what we mean
4. Learning how to show energy in both leadership and congregation
5. Don't want to lose our reasoning side.

Solutions which might apply to overcoming the obstacles:

- A. Any change will be introduced in a reasonable and intentional way.
- B. Specific explanation for why energy and emotions are appropriate in worship
- C. Offer a time in the service for passing of the peace.
- D. Offer a time of appreciation at the end of the service.
- E. Use choir in responses very often as music often evokes a depth of emotion not easily found through other means.
- F. Let children sing or congregation sing more upbeat hymns as children come forward for children's sermon.
- G. A corporate "Amen" or way for congregation to express emotion

- H. Good communication
- I. Develop and maintain training for worship leaders.
- J. Send people to other churches to get ideas.
- K. Ask the congregation to say something when passing communion (e.g. “this is the body of Christ”) in recognition that we are serving one another in the passing of the elements.
- L. Be persistent and patient.

Action Steps for accomplishing the goal might include:

- Re-constitute a Worship Ministry Group which has a seat and vote on the Administrative Board and Council of Ministries.
- The Worship Ministry Group would develop and maintain support for weekly worship leaders.
- The Worship Ministry Group would work in concert with the Music Ministry Group to consider the recommendations mentioned in the Solutions section above.

Additional Ideas from Brainstorming Session

Let us not lose other issues/ideas not mentioned above that were generated in the original brainstorming session which may be important to a Meaningful Worship Experience for some such as:

- Sound system improvement
- Expensive refurbishments of the aging Holtcamp organ

Strategies for Faith and Spiritual Formation

Central members have generally been pleased with past faith formation opportunities including Sunday School, music programs and TEAM-type classes. Programs for children, youth, and young adults have been strengthened, but programs for visitors may need further attention. There is a need for dramatic change in the church’s culture because of declining membership and purchasing power of operational funds. Consequently, members will need to change their perspective from being “consumers” of the church to providing each other the nurture and support previously provided by staff.

Faith & Spiritual Formation Goal #1:

In covenant with God and each other, Central Christian Church will expand and nurture a culture of coordinated cooperation among its ministerial staff, lay ministry and leadership to be a more vital community and body of Christ.

Discussion:

Discussion about this goal centered on the need for better accountability by the congregation, the ministers, and staff. The perceived lack of accountability today frustrates both the congregation and staff and is an impediment to achieving the church’s accomplishment of its mission. There does not seem to be the willingness or ability for congregants to assume

responsibilities for operation of the church as it is currently structured. Members of the congregation have voiced a feeling that they do not have an opportunity to identify and use their gifts. A more public method of calling members to contribute their gifts will allow a greater opportunity for more extensive participation.

Benefits of achieving the goal of coordinated cooperation among Central's ministerial staff, lay ministry and leadership include

To us as individuals:

- Members of the congregation will become more accountable to themselves, others, and God.
- Members of the congregation will have an opportunity to use all their spiritual gifts.

To the church and world:

- More involvement from the congregation will build energy which would be visible within the church and world.

Obstacles which may tend to prevent reaching this goal:

1. Some people are accustomed to being consumers of a faith experience rather than experiencing faith through action.
2. This change would be a dramatic departure from the way many congregants and ministers have functioned in the past. Implementing this may change ministerial job descriptions and congregational expectations greatly.
3. Some people are busy, tired, and disillusioned in addition to feeling a lack of vitality.
4. It may be very difficult to change the culture of Central.
5. There is a perceived lack of opportunity for lay leadership to step up to create or lead in ministry areas based on their gifts and calling. There is a perception that the process of identifying and choosing members of the congregation for leadership or service roles is not an open process.
6. There is a lack of consistent follow-up and accountability by persons making commitments.

Solutions which will work on overcoming the obstacles:

- A. Identify people's spiritual gifts and empower them to action.
- B. Offer leadership training.
- C. Take a team approach of ministerial and leadership development tactics in the life of Central.
- D. Initiate a continued discussion about why follow-up is important and how accountability can be more effectively achieved within Central.

Action Steps for accomplishing this goal could involve:

- Teach the concept of the "ministry of the laity" in partnership with ministerial staff.
- Identify people's spiritual gifts and empower them to action.
- Provide leadership training.
- Identify existing and new opportunities for ministries.
- Identify philosophy for winding down past ministries which may no longer be priorities.
- Develop a process to match gifts with needs. A lay team will need to do this with staff support.

- Develop continuous communication about the ministry of the laity to change the culture. Effecting this culture change will require a great deal of conscious effort and communication.

Faith & Spiritual Formation Goal #2:

Provide a greater variety of experiences for faith formation.

Discussion:

The discussion about this goal centered on the desire for faith formation classes or programs which reflect the current needs of members and visitors. There is a desire for the congregation to have more input into the topics, format and vehicles available.

Benefits of providing a variety of experiences for faith formation include

To us as individuals:

- Small groups were recognized as being very important for congregants in the life of the church.
- Connects us to the roots of our faith
- Provide communities of support and nurture for the faith journey

To our church:

- These classes and programs provide strong opportunities for evangelism.

Obstacles which could prevent achievement of the goal:

1. Lack of partnership within the congregation and between lay leadership and clergy
2. Limited financing for meaningful classes or experiences
3. Lack of opportunity for lay leadership to step up and to create and lead in ministry areas based on their gifts and calling
4. Timing and schedules are difficult for busy people and electronic offerings may not build community for the participants.

Solutions which will work to overcome the obstacles:

- A. Gifts and interest inventories need to be taken.
- B. Offering multiple choices and times using current technology whenever possible would help solve the issue of scheduling for busy people.

Action Steps for accomplishing this goal could involve:

- Conduct an inventory of the broad gifts of the congregation, both spiritual and otherwise.
- Develop a mechanism for periodically identifying needs and developing subjects or topics for faith formation.
- Identify a technology budget to make offerings available using current technologies.
- Locate and train leaders.
- Schedule activities.
- Widely publicize the Elders' Welcome statement.
- Identify and develop ways in which we welcome people into discipleship.
- Identify and develop the process by which we assess and understand the faith development needs of incoming visitors.

- Identify and develop a way to incorporate all new members into a small group of some kind.
- Refocus efforts on small group development.

Additional Ideas Developed During the Brainstorming Session

Ideas from this focus group that were important and must not be lost, but not included in the goals statements are:

- Meet people where they want to be met.
- Poll congregation for ideas for forming small groups which are considered to be important for members.
- Need new small group ministry model to provide leadership training
- Need neighborhood partnerships

Stewardship of Time, Talents and Treasures

Over the course of the past 5 years Central Christian Church has exerted considerable energy to financial stewardship because of debt incurred via the expansion of church buildings and the gradual decline in church membership/worship attendance. Both things have generated a heightened need for capital and operational giving. Some donor fatigue may have set in. With the decline in church participation, the pressure to raise more dollars from fewer people exists. The congregational survey of December 2012 revealed that members of the church still see Stewardship of Time, Talents and Treasures as a necessary point of focus while the church charts its future. The survey indicated that church members believed that the involvement of lay leaders in the stewardship of Time and Talents was and is a strength of the church and that those leaders are seen as capable, caring and competent. Central members are seen as generous in their giving of financial resources as evidenced by the mean percent of gross income that they give to the church (5%), vis-a-vis the national average of mainline churches of 2.43% in 2008. The national statistic has declined steadily for the past 50 years. Elements of this focus group's discussion included both communicating needs of our church within its vision/mission to encourage financial giving and making sure there are available multiple methods of giving to make it convenient, e.g. exploring methods of making donations electronically.

At the same time, the congregation believes it needs to broaden its concept of stewardship to focus more attention to time and talents. Stewardship is more than just money. The survey data suggest that members could perform more volunteer roles such as lawn care, gardening, care of facilities, etc. Because some individuals feel they are being passed over for different roles, there is a need to update the survey of members' talents and interests relative to the needs of the church.

Finally, the competition for scarce resources (time, talents and treasures) has created some conflicts among various ministry groups which need to be addressed.

Stewardship Goal #1:

Feed people spiritually so that we are full and desire to give.

Discussion:

Central needs to get back to basics to understand the reasons for giving to the church in whatever form that takes (time, talent and/or treasure). The emphasis must go beyond just keeping the lights on for logistics sake. The body of Christ and the community of faith as witnessed with and through Central's members and its "house" require nurturing as an act of witness and of spreading the Good News. Stewardship in its best form resembles a 3-legged stool where all three elements (Time, Talent and Treasures) should be represented. While each member/donor freely decides individual levels he or she can contribute to each of the three legs, the church, as a community of faith, should strive to encourage all to participate so that there is enough of all three.

Benefits of feeding people spiritually so that we are full and desire to give include

To us as individuals:

- Members will be encouraged to participate.
- Individuals will grow in their faith.

To us as a church:

- The church and its witness to the Good News will undoubtedly be enhanced by the increase in individual stewardship.
- The church will benefit operationally and financially from individual participation.

To the community/world:

- The church's ability to spread the Good News will be enhanced with improved stewardship.

Obstacles which might attempt to prevent the goal's achievement are:

1. Limited success in attracting new members/participants to the church
2. Choosing the wrong path/strategy (future direction of the church)
3. Unable to reach potential members (see obstacle one above)

Solutions which might apply to overcoming the obstacles:

- A. More effective communication and marketing of the church's strengths
- B. As church members become more active and take greater responsibility for evangelism, the likelihood of more members joining the church will increase.
- C. Make the face of Central be better perceived as meeting identified needs of its members so that people will want to be a part of church membership as engaged and stewardship minded members.
- D. The visioning process will generate an enhanced and better structured future for the church.

Actions Steps for accomplishing the goal might include:

- Conduct consistent and regular stewardship education across the entire congregation.
- Create a new Ministry Group for communicating so that the spiritual focus and follow-up of stewardship is insured with consistency, across all age groups on a regular/recurring basis.

- Insure that the above noted education extends to early church life for youth members as well as adults and families new to Central.

Stewardship Goal #2:

Continuously discern, identify, plan and execute activities that address the needs of Central, to include its individual members, the church as a body, and the community/world.

Discussion:

The Stewardship focus group felt strongly that the church must redouble its efforts to identify the needs of the church (strategic and tactical) through careful and constant examination and then establish plans to address and meet those needs. This entire exercise should include specific elements for individual members, the church (as a community of faith) and, where applicable, the community/world.

Benefits of continually exploring, identifying and implementing the needs of the church to include its individual members and the community/world include

To us as individuals:

- Matches Time, Talents and Treasures with needs of the church
- An increased feeling of engagement and worth of time spent

To our Church:

- The operational efficiency of the church is enhanced.
- Membership and engagement for the benefit of the church will be enhanced when individual members feel a sense of engagement and individual worth.

To the community/world:

- The ability of the church to make a difference in the community/world will be enhanced as the level of engagement of its individual members and the church increases.

Obstacles which might attempt to prevent this goal's achievement are:

1. Inability to adequately allocate sufficient time and effort toward the needs of the church (resource allocation)
2. Inability to reach all church members due to poor communications

Solutions which may apply to overcoming the obstacles are:

- A. Visioning process will identify well developed needs of the church with an eye to matching of resources and needs.
- B. Improve the church's ability to effectively identify the needs of the congregation and communicate opportunities to serve.

Action Steps for accomplishing the goal might include:

- Assess the needs of the church, especially the gaps that now exist.
- Survey individual church members to determine talents and willingness to be engaged.
- Match the talents and needs identified in the above 2 steps.
- Generate plans to follow up and follow through.

- Continually communicate with church members so that people will take ownership of commitments and levels of engagement.

Stewardship Goal #3:

Improve the church's ability to effectively communicate its opportunities and needs to the congregation, keeping it simple and direct.

Discussion:

It is important to openly communicate that all elements of effective stewardship are essential for the wellbeing of our church. The most successful discussions and plans are those that are communicated best. As noted above, effective stewardship includes all known resources and how they are put to good use. Goal number 3 is intended to address good communication techniques as an essential element of good stewardship.

Benefits of effectively communicating opportunities and needs to the congregation include To us as individuals and the church:

- Messages are enhanced by constant reinforcement via good communication techniques.
- Stewardship is improved.

Obstacles which might attempt to prevent this goal's achievement:

1. Difficulty in getting church members engaged and excited
2. Communication methods not easily accessible or affordable
3. Insufficient staff time and resources

Solutions which may apply to overcoming the obstacles are:

- A. Better communication
- B. Identify person(s) who can identify and help implement accessible and affordable communication tools and methods.
- C. More effective use of deacons, elders and leadership in lieu of shortages of staff time and resources
- D. Enlist a volunteer coordinator/team in the identification/planning process.

Action Steps for accomplishing the goal might include:

- Develop a more defined structure for assessing needs (New Ministry Group?).
- Improvement and implementation of effective and active Central website
- Utilize social media and make it attractive and easy to access.
- Sustained communication regarding the Every Member Campaign (EMC) to include the important step of follow up and follow through

- During Sunday worship service, communicate church's opportunities, needs and specific recognition of individuals and groups and their respective accomplishments on behalf of the church.
- More frequent, large group social activities (e.g. after church) to foster engagement and further identification of needs and recognition of success

Additional Ideas Developed During Brainstorming Session

Let us not lose other issues/ideas that were generated in the brainstorming sessions which may be important to Stewardship for some such as:

- A stewardship theme idea was "*Do What You Can Do.*"
- Acknowledge works which lift up the time and talents people give to the church.
- Use Sunday worship time to communicate more of the needs and deeds of the church and its people.
- Change our mindset from buying a service (read: paying for services rendered, food consumed, etc.) to doing the service (donated time and food).
- Our need for greater stewardship should be directed more toward the EMC.
- Communicate more with church members as necessary via a phone call - a more personal touch when they don't come to church.
- Better utilize the time we have while we are here.

Faith into Action through Outreach

Outreach has been and continues to be seen as a primary ministry of Central Christian Church. It is the third largest budgeted item, following only operating expenditures for personnel and property in size of monetary commitment. If overhead and personnel costs are allocated to the ministry areas, Outreach rises to the second largest budgeted item. It was mentioned as the second most important strength of Central by respondents of the 2012 congregational survey. Outreach is seen as a commitment and strength of Central's time, talent and treasure. Our treasure is used to provide financial assistance in over 20 different programs. A listing of the current financial outreach commitments may be found in the annual budget document and consequently are not listed here. Other outreach efforts involve time and talent of our members even though they are not budgeted. Such unbudgeted efforts include the Thrift Shop, Adopt-a-School, Music Academy, the Refugee Ministry, and Central Church Apartments. A growing area of outreach concern involves issues of social justice through such efforts as BUILD.

Even with the funding emphasis, some feel the weakness of our church in this respect is that we do not commit enough financial resources to this important ministry area. Adequate staffing is encouraged in this area. More staffing than a part time effort by one minister in residence is desired. Some feel that justice efforts, as distinct from mercy activities, are an important part of outreach and need to be strengthened. They feel it is a Christian responsibility to be intentional about promoting justice. There appears to be never-ending opportunities for increasing outreach efforts and in the survey it was clear that there is some feeling that existing commitments need to be strengthened, especially from the standpoint of additional time and talent, before starting new

programs or services. Partnering with like-minded congregations seems to be a way to overcome the threat of diminishing resources and thus position Central to better take advantage of opportunities in this important area.

Outreach Goal #1

Communicate Outreach happenings and opportunities to our congregation and community in a thorough and consistent way across all media.

Discussion:

Communicating outreach efforts to the congregation more effectively was the idea in the focus group which received the most weighted votes of the many ideas generated during the brainstorming session. Ideas grouped within this by focus group members include:

- Increase church members involvement in outreach, e.g. families doing Room In The Inn and St James meals
- Send regular outreach emails to the congregation

It was felt that much of what is being done is a “best kept secret” in our church and within the community. Yet additional volunteer services and funding are needed in this area of our church ministry. A trend that has resulted in a decrease of funding to this important ministry needs to be reversed. An important first step is making sure everyone is aware of what is being done and is planned to be done in this ministry.

Benefits of creating a system to enhance our communication of the outreach ministry activities include:

To us as individuals:

- Being drawn out of my comfort zone
- I might find a better fit for me.
- Doing Christ’s command

To our church:

- Our church is drawn out of its comfort zone.
- More people will be involved in doing Christ’s command.
- Church growth
- People will believe.

To our community/world:

- Improved accessibility and more in communion and concert with our community
- Doing Christ’s command
- Improves community
- Changes lives for the better

Obstacles which might attempt to prevent this goal’s achievement:

1. Nay sayers
2. Inadequate money
3. Lack of personnel resources with proper understanding and enthusiasm
4. Multiple audiences to reach
5. Multiple media needed to be used
6. Uncertainty about how to stimulate interest

Solutions which might apply to overcoming the obstacles:

- A. Recruit an information technology visionary.
- B. Communicate vignettes showing outreach activities and benefits.
- C. Communicate what is involved and how much time is required in different jobs and job elements.
- D. Listen and address fear factors up front.
- E. Restructure opportunities.
- F. Inventory member interests and match with opportunities.

Action Steps for accomplishing this goal might include:

- Take an inventory of what is now being done to communicate our outreach efforts.
- Determine the multiple ways in which our outreach efforts may be effectively communicated
 - to our members,
 - to prospective members, and
 - to the community.
- Determine the content of what should be communicated, the frequency of communication, and the range of volunteer and giving opportunities.
 - Determine the nature of communication of the programs.
 - Clarify the time and talent needed for each outreach effort.
 - Use success vignettes to encourage participation in particular programs.
- Determine the regularity with which communication should occur for outreach as a whole and for each program within it.
- Establish and assign responsibility for making sure regular communication content about each program is carried out.

Outreach Goal #2

Be Christ's voice and agent for social and economic justice, as well as mercy.

Discussion:

Being a voice for economic and social justice is the second highest priority of those attending the focus group sessions for Outreach. Grouped within the important idea of being a voice for economic and social justice are:

- focusing outreach (each activity) in the frame of mercy and justice,
- conducting outreach with somebody rather than just for somebody, and
- providing education about the issues rather than just service.

An increasing number of members have been attending the justice effort currently being waged in our community, with 40 persons from our church attending the May 2013 BUILD event.

Benefits of being Christ's voice and agent for social and economic justice and mercy include:

To us as individuals:

- Fill a great void in my church life
- Give me a sense of belonging to something bigger that God wants
- Make a mark

To our church:

- Grow our church
- Establish the conscience of our church as a congregation

To the community/world:

- Make a mark

Obstacles which might attempt to prevent this goal's achievement:

1. Misunderstanding of the relationship between mercy and justice
2. Differences of opinion about justice
3. People who are anti-justice or anti-political may misunderstand justice and its relationship to the church.
4. Inadequacy of money
5. Fear (outside of our comfort zone)
6. Lack of courage

Solutions which might apply to overcoming the obstacles:

- A. Educate about the concepts of mercy, justice and their relatedness.
- B. Make justice a ChristCare group.
- C. Create an atmosphere where social justice is discussed as an issue of God.
- D. Help people focus on future benefits.
- E. Establish leadership (staff and lay persons) supportive of justice.

Action Steps which will help achieve this goal:

- Establish a clear and concise definition of mercy and justice as presented by Christ in the Gospel which spells out the distinctiveness, yet interrelatedness, of the terms.
- Determine and recruit a champion (a staff person or lay person) for the concepts of mercy and justice, someone who will help us get excited and motivated to make the concepts a part of Central's current and future efforts.
- Clarify the "job description" of the champion and assist that person in getting started by announcing the role and presence of the person assigned that role.
- Make the discussion of mercy and justice a part of our daily lives and thoughts at Central by:
 - determining a plan and program for introducing the concepts to our members in realistic and operational ways,
 - determine how the concepts apply to existing programs and outreach efforts, and
 - establishing a way in which such terms are woven into the fabric of existing programs and small group actions.

Additional Brainstorm Discussion Ideas

Other ideas and issues presented but not formulated into goals at this point, but which might be, include:

- Find out about our neighbors and their needs. (A topic the group would have developed into a third goal statement except for lack of time to do so. It may be related to Central's decision to remain a downtown church.)
 - Obtain a clear definition of "neighbors" from the perspective of Central's congregation.

- Better match the demographics outside our church in terms of race, multigenerational mix, etc. with our church's programmatic efforts.
- Have Kid's Café on Saturdays.
- Re-evaluate and reallocate dollars and people resources to meet the needs and benefits of the community.
- Restore outreach to its prior larger percentage of operating budget and foundation proceeds.
- Determine what other churches are doing and make sure we are coordinating with them in ALL Efforts.
- Make Central's unique location and facilities more available for community activities in addition to things like Room In The Inn and God's Pantry, e.g.:
 - Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) groups,
 - more senior activities,
 - PFLAG (Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays) group, and
 - bringing in neighbors to church activities, e.g. concerts, etc.

Nurturing Members

Nurturing is seen by Central's members to include being the eyes, ears, hands and feet of God among Central's members. Nurturing of Central's members is seen as a strength of the church. Members reported feeling others within the church community sincerely care about them and that in times of crisis they are cared for both by the pastoral staff and lay programs such as Telecare, Stephen Ministers, Parish Nurses, ChristCare groups, Disciples Women and Home Communion. Fellowship dinners such as "Dinners for 8" help establish relationships in small groups. Without such relationships, members are not as likely to stay involved and be a part of the community of faith. This Opportunity Area is clearly not mutually exclusive from the Building Community within Central Opportunity Area, especially in the importance of small group development.

In spite of the positive comments concerning Central's nurturing activities; there is still a strong feeling of room for improvement. Improving nurturing of members is viewed as critical to reversing the trend of declining membership and attendance within Central and an opportunity for Central in today's culture where there appears to be an exodus of especially the millennial generation from "organized religion." Special attention continues to be needed for reliable pastoral and lay members' care of seniors, bereaved, families in special situations (including but not limited to births, children leaving home, job change, family problems, teen problems, and young families), new members, those who are sick, those in nursing homes, those who are disabled, and those who are homebound.

Nurturing Members Goal #1

Establish a nurturing system with excellent communication which includes follow-up on a variety of mechanisms of caring for each other.

Discussion:

This goal statement was developed to give guidance to what the focus group stated as: “Having systematic ways of caring for each other, with accountability.” The emphasis is on development of a system that will accommodate a variety of nurturing activities and programs as well as encourage better communication, accountability and follow-up. An important emphasis of this goal includes nurturing as a responsibility of the members of Central as a community, not simply an expectation of pastoral staff.

Communication to and from the ministers and among members providing nurturing care is important. Central may need to change to one of membership taking the lead in providing nurturing instead of expecting all nurturing leadership coming primarily from the ministerial staff. Several specific nurturing activities/programs were presented as examples during the process of clarifying the goal statement. Many of these examples of nurturing are excellent, but the establishment of an overall system of nurturing is considered critical to the success of all such programs. Programs and techniques discussed as examples include:

- the shepherding program,
- using longer-lived small groups to develop relationships,
- making sure the pew attendance books are used for follow-up of visitors (with email follow-up for those providing email addresses),
- assigning mentors to newer members and visitors,
- following up with members who may be on their way to leaving Central (disappearing members), and
- using one-on-one communication to keep track of members whom we are nurturing (email/phone/face-to-face).

Benefits of creating a system to follow up on the variety of nurturing mechanisms we use as we continue to enhance the body, mind and spirit of our church include:

To us as individuals:

- I will feel better in helping and building relationship with others.
- I’ll be caught when I fall.
- I will have a stronger feeling of belonging.

To our church:

- Members will feel cared for.
- Our church will grow.
- We will be walking Christ’s walk.

To our community/world:

- The community will know someone cares.
- We will be a model of the Gospel.

Obstacles which might attempt to prevent this goal's achievement:

1. Inadequate manpower
2. Lack of money
3. Must know each other first
4. Some people are not social
5. Scheduling conflicts
6. Complexity of the variety of ways we nurture and their related accountability

Solutions which might apply to overcoming the obstacles:

- A. The new Senior Minister should have an appetite and ability to operationally lead the nurturing effort.
- B. Have someone other than the Senior Minister take responsibility and authority for managing the day-to-day operations of nurturing members.
- C. Equip people to care (help develop skills and abilities to provide this service to our members).
- D. Design the system to accommodate a variety in both methods of providing care to our members and in being accountable for that care.

Action Steps which may help reach the goal:

- Obtain ministerial and church leadership's commitment to the importance of establishing a system to guide and monitor nurturing members.
- Identify the staff member and lay group(s) to provide oversight of nurturing activities.
- Identify nurturing programs which fall within a system to be monitored by the person/group.
- Specify the elements of each program which are to be tracked.
- Develop leaders of each program such that they understand and can provide guidance to their particular program and are willing to regularly report to the management structure established in the above steps.

Nurturing Members Goal #2

Help the church's school age youth enjoy attending church and church events.

Discussion:

It is important to give special attention to helping those in grade school through high school enjoy coming to church and church events, i.e. having fun is a long term idea that must be rooted in short term programs and behaviors. As so often said by many, our future is in our youth and we must make sure we are providing them the most beneficial experiences to provide a solid foundation in their faith journey. Keeping them interested in attending both church and church events is important to accomplishing this end. There is consensus that the Worship and Wonder program does a great job of nurturing the age group to which it is aimed. KidsCentral, KidsSing and Vacation Bible School also are noted as a successful programs helping with this goal. However, beyond the age group to which these programs focus, the youth seem to lose interest and their nurturing is diminished. This is the concern to which this goal is especially aimed.

Benefits of making church and church events more enjoyable for school age youth include

To us as individuals:

- Excitement
- Enjoyment of watching children and youth mature within the church
- Energy and support will enrich me.

To our church:

- Excitement
- Our church will grow.
- New vitality in our church

To our community/world:

- Excitement will be turned to service.
- We will be growing Christians.
- We will be a role model.
- There will be an improved world culture, and the world will be a better place.

Obstacles which might attempt to prevent this goal's achievement:

1. Inadequate human power, energy and time
2. Tradition, philosophy and rules of our church
3. Outside influences and activities, e.g. schedules, sports, friends
4. What attracts youth may be too contemporary for some members.
5. This goal is not a high enough priority for our church.

Solutions which might apply to overcoming the obstacles:

- A. Communicate problems and limitations to the congregation.
- B. Change priorities.
- C. Provide other activities outside of Sunday.
- D. Develop activities that are more exciting and meaningful to the age group(s).
- E. Enlist and train leaders to develop this goal and act as liaison between these age groups and others.
- F. Recruit and activate new members for the Children's Ministry Group and Youth Ministry Group.
- G. Provide an opportunity for the students to express themselves and their discoveries/skills/knowledge.

Action Steps which may help reach the goal:

- Identify what the school age youth of different ages see as positive about the experiences they have at Central.
- Identify what the school age youth of different ages see as boring or as less relevant/meaningful to them.
- Establish a program for youth nurturing each other.
 - Determine a way to get youth of different ages involved in nurturing others as a means of making things more meaningful for the youth.
 - Design such a program based on feedback from youth and their parents.
 - Recruit youth into the program at appropriate age levels.

Brainstorming Session Results Ideas Not Specified in the Above Goals

The brainstorming session accomplished prior to the Goal Planning Session resulted in additional ideas which we must not lose sight of as well. These ideas include:

- Leader development for nurturing members
- Establish follow-up contact of new members and those with multiple absences, especially via emails, phone calls and visits to those members.
- Pair new members and visitors with mentors.
- Make sure we are adequately communicating to ALL members
 - using multiple methods to assure all are receiving needed information, and
 - educating the congregation about what nurturing ministries are available.
- Ministers become more involved in the lives of members
- Develop better ways to conduct relationship building, such as:
 - Recognize birthdays, anniversaries, etc., including special life events in members' lives.
 - Establish ways to connect members according to common interests, demographics and/or geographics in small groups, e.g. hold event nights.
- Help people know how to serve by identifying gifts of people who might serve using methods such as:
 - Spiritual Gifts Inventory - a Spiritual Gifts Inventory can be administered and tracked so members and the church are aware of individual gifts so that they can be matched with ministry opportunities. Once the spiritual gifts are known, care needs to be taken to ensure all people have the opportunity to serve.
 - Conducting home visits where one asks for areas of interest and gifts to share.
- Develop a means of recognition for persons serving in nurturing roles.
- Provide more support to family care givers.

Building Community within Central

The main thrust of Building Community within Central is to create a sense of community within the church family. In order to consider Central his or her church home, every individual needs a sense of belonging. We need to be a warm, friendly, welcoming congregation that is inclusive of all individuals. The challenge is to communicate that message and then to help individuals find the programs and groups where they feel comfortable and supported.

From the survey of the congregation, we found that Central members feel a sense of community which is considered friendly, kind, warm and welcoming. The third highest score from the congregational survey was the item indicating that we as a community welcome people of diverse backgrounds. We highly value open-mindedness and inclusivity of all (particularly mentioned was race and sexual orientation). Many appreciate the ways they can be involved in small groups, Disciples Women, Sunday School classes, youth activities, etc. Some newer members cited Central's openness and friendliness as the primary reason they chose Central as their church home.

In spite of the positive feelings of the members concerning Central's sense of community, there is the sentiment that some areas need to be strengthened. Examples given are fellowship opportunities for young adults, singles, men, young families, and the elderly; recreational activities for adults; the formation of more small groups (Christ Care); and more church-wide social functions. There is also the sense that there would be greater involvement if there was better communication of existing fellowship opportunities, especially among newer members.

Building Community Goal #1

Improve communication of community-building opportunities through multiple methods so that people are informed, connected, and have a sense of belonging.

Discussion:

Communication issues surfaced as by far the most important topic in building community. The emphasis of this goal is on the communication of the community-building opportunities. Information needs to be provided concerning existing, as well as new programs and activities. Multiple methods of communicating community-building opportunities would include such things as keeping people informed of upcoming activities in a timely manner, including information on new members in the Chimes, providing written information on Sunday School classes, small groups, Women's' Circles, etc. in the pew racks, repeating the survey of member interests, and using social networking and other electronic communication methods.

Benefits of better communicating community-building opportunities include:

To us as individuals:

- We will feel connected.
- We will have a feeling of being included.
- We will have a sense of belonging.
- We will want to give to others.
- We will have a feeling that others care about us.

To our church:

- Growth in membership
- Strong foundation of the church
- Actively involved membership
- Openness to all individuals
- Know each other
- Support each other

To our community/world:

- Ministry to the community
- Service to the needy
- Healthier attitude toward others

Obstacles which might attempt to prevent this goal's achievement are:

1. Poor communication
2. Never done it that way
3. Shyness

4. Closed groups not open to others
5. Lack of lay leadership

Solutions which might apply to overcoming the obstacles are:

- A. A mentoring system for leaders
- B. Involvement opportunities are publicized.
- C. Have a culture of joy
- D. Survey of interests of the members
- E. Equip and encourage members to share the nature of their group's activities
- F. New member mentoring

Action Steps for accomplishing this goal might include:

- Improve communication of community building opportunities through:
 - the Chimes,
 - the electronic sign,
 - social media,
 - the placement of materials in the pew racks, and
 - announcements before the worship service.
- Repeat the survey of member interests and share the results.
- Include information on new members in the Chimes so these individuals can be matched with appropriate groups.
- Develop a system of mentoring, especially for new members.

Building Community Goal #2

Incorporate the needs of the millennial generation (20s and 30s age group) when planning community-building programs and activities.

Discussion:

The millennial generation, sometimes referred to as Generation Y, are individuals in their 20s and 30s. The future of Central will, to a great extent, depend upon the involvement of individuals and families in this age group. Central needs to determine how to appeal to millennials and how to more extensively involve them in the life of the church.

Benefits of incorporating the needs of the millennial generation when planning community-building activities are:

To us as individuals:

- We would have the opportunity for fellowship between generations.
- It would add a different perspective.
- It would add a diversity of ages.
- It would bring more energy and new ideas.
- Greater involvement of millennials would provide leadership opportunities and training for them.

To our church:

- Younger adults and youth leading services
- Greater diversity

- Growing the church
- Reverse the aging trend of our membership
- More energy and new ideas

To the community/world:

- Church is alive within the community.
- Church contributes more to the community and the world.
- Central is seen as a place for millennials to attend church.

Obstacles which might attempt to prevent the goal's achievement are:

1. Lack of leadership from the millennial group
2. Timing of events don't fit their schedules
3. Old folks don't care
4. People are too busy
5. Not seen as a priority
6. Poor use of technology (e.g. web site)
7. Unclear what the needs of millennials are
8. Little involvement of millennials in planning community-building programs

Solutions which might apply to overcoming the obstacles are:

- A. Improve staff and leadership coordination to reach this audience
- B. Conduct research on the needs of millennials
- C. Plan events with adequate lead time
- D. Highlight this audience in the Chimes and on the web site
- E. Involve millennials in all aspects of the church
- F. Show the benefit of the involvement of millennials for all members

Action Steps for accomplishing this goal might include:

- Determine the specific needs of millennials.
- Insure that there are millennials involved in all ministry areas, committees, deacons, and the administrative board.
- Plan events and activities with sufficient lead time to allow for adequate scheduling.
- Make better use of modern technology in communication as a means of building community.

Building Community Goal #3

Identify the current fellowship opportunities and increase the number, type and participation in fellowship groups and activities.

Discussion:

The types of fellowship opportunities referred to in this goal are after-church lunches and programs; fellowship groups of men, single women, young families, women's circles, groups by age, stage of life, or special interests; small groups (ChristCare); and church picnics and outings. The issue is seen as two-fold: insufficient fellowship opportunities and a lack of communication and involvement in existing ones.

Benefits of increased involvement of individuals in fellowship activities are:

To us as individuals:

- We would have increased involvement in the church.
- We would not feel lonely.
- We would nurture each other.
- We would make new friends and get to know more people.
- There would be more fun and joy.

To our church:

- There would be growth.
- Members would feel connected.
- Members would have a feeling of ownership.
- It would enrich church life.
- We would have more joy and energy.

To our community/world:

- Ministries to others outside of Central
- Fellowship opportunities
- Moral witness within the community
- Joy
- Connecting with other Disciples

Obstacles which might attempt to prevent this goal's achievement are:

1. Lack of leadership
2. Lack of information on the opportunities
3. Closed groups
4. Lack of time, low priority
5. Lack of resources (money)
6. Lack of signage in the sanctuary building
7. Lack of interest by some members

Solutions which might apply to overcoming the obstacles are:

- A. Leadership by clergy, redefine jobs to emphasize community building
- B. Strengthen lay leadership
- C. Improve communication
- D. Increase creativity
- E. Use of electronic methods
- F. Specify time-line of commitment
- G. Funding (new and redistribution)
- H. New ideas for fellowship and small groups

Action Steps for accomplishing this goal might include:

- Inventory existing fellowship groups, special interest groups, small groups, women's circles, etc.; communicate that information to all individuals; and invite their participation.
- Form new fellowship or small groups where needed for such individuals as:
 - men

- single women
- young families
- the elderly
- special interests
- Conduct training for group leaders on how to secure greater participation in existing groups and in the formation of new groups.
- Reinvigorate small group ministry, if not ChristCare then a similar model.

Additional Ideas Identified During Brainstorming Session

In addition to the topics for which goals were developed, other issues/ideas were generated in the brainstorming session which may be important to Building Community within Central. They are:

- Cultivate a culture of fun and joy
- Work together on mission opportunities
- Recreation and other activities for adults
- Share history of Central
- Coffee house night
- Greeting time incorporated into the worship service

Attracting New Members

It is evident from the results of the congregational survey and the discussions from the focus groups that Central sees itself as welcoming. This was reported by survey respondents as a reason they returned after initially visiting Central. The Elders' Welcome Statement was specifically noted as evidence of our openness. While these elements are among the strengths, respondents felt that our greeting of first-time attendees could be enhanced. It should include educating newcomers about our church, its programs and opportunities to become involved, and weave their participation into the fabric of Central. In addition, we need to continue to look for opportunities to communicate our message to the community.

The following goals were developed and are offered as an Action Plan to move Central forward in attracting new members. The discussions during the focus group sessions included recognition and positive acknowledgement of our past and present evangelism efforts, but were primarily focused on what we can do in the future to strengthen the Ministry of Evangelism. What could be done to create a better process and product? Evangelism is a very vital ministry for Central or any church desiring to stay alive and grow its membership. The following goals are offered to give the Ministry of Evangelism a high priority in terms of Central's congregational life. These goals also advocate for proper funding and staffing. Many additional ideas were identified during the focus group meetings and are listed at the end of this Attracting New Members section.

Attracting Members Goal #1:

As part of a comprehensive Evangelism Program, develop strategies that place emphasis on congregational involvement by building personal responsibility among congregants to reach out to attract new members.

Discussion:

The discussion that led to the formation of this goal was surrounded with a conversation about personal responsibility by members. Attracting new members is ultimately the responsibility of each member by extending personal invitations to friends, neighbors, and people we know or with whom we have relationships.

Benefits of achieving the goal of more congregational involvement in evangelism effort of Central include

To us as an individual:

- I will engage and get to know persons I do not know.
- I will feel a greater sense of community and would encourage my friends and others to attend.
- I will feel more connected to the church.

To our church:

- Members will engage each other more.
- Members of our church will have a greater understanding of personal evangelism.
- Central will attract new members.

To the community and world:

- Demonstrates a more sharing and engaging church
- Reveals a loving and welcoming congregation
- Reveals the embodiment of Christ

Obstacles which may tend to prevent us from reaching the goal:

1. Inadequate money
2. Sociability level of congregation
3. Lack of intentional leadership

Solutions which may help overcome the above obstacles:

- A. Provide necessary budgetary funds.
- B. Identify evangelism as a priority with intentional leadership.
- C. Provide training for congregational members on how to engage one another and social opportunities to do so.

Action Steps to help reach this goal might include to:

- Provide dedicated leadership to the Evangelism Ministry.
- Survey and engage the best literature on evangelism and evaluate what other congregations are doing about evangelism.
- Develop appropriate training materials to engage the congregation.
- Train and equip the congregation with the techniques to evangelize.
- Have a goal of a positive net gain of at least ten (10) new members per year.

Attracting Members Goal #2:

Develop a simple and clear statement about how Central, through its ministries, empowers and enhances meaning in people's lives.

Discussion:

The question that became the source of discussion was "What does Central offer, in terms of ministries, that brings meaning to the lives of those who attend?" It became evident that our ministries such as worship, outreach, Christian education, etc. not only add meaning to our lives and those with whom we come in contact, but also determine how we and others perceive ourselves and the world around us.

Benefits of achieving the goal of having a clear and simple statement of how Central empowers its ministries include

To us as individuals:

- I will feel a better sense of belonging.
- I will be empowered by a clear statement on our theology.
- I would encourage my friends to attend.

To our church:

- Attract new members
- Our church will grow.
- Will fulfill the call of the Gospel

To the community/world:

- Will show that the message of love, hope, and compassion is alive at Central
- Sends a message of community to our extended community
- Shows the embodiment of Christ is in our midst

Obstacles which may tend to prevent us from reaching the goal:

1. Inadequate funds
2. Evangelism Ministerial Group lacks visibility
3. Diminished evangelistic resources available

Solutions which may help overcome the above obstacles:

- A. Provide the necessary funds for programming.
- B. Canvas the congregation for additional persons who might be interested in evangelism and encourage them to participate.
- C. Raise the profile of the evangelism effort.

Action Steps to help reach this goal might include:

- Establish mechanisms to ensure the strengthening of the Evangelism Ministerial Group.
- Research current literature and media information on attracting new members.
- Identify target groups and/or demographic areas to attract to Central.
- Develop and communicate using various media forms, a clear statement of the case for becoming a member of Central.

Attracting Members Goal #3:

As part of a comprehensive Evangelism Program, improve the church's web presence and use of social media technology with a focus on attracting new members.

Discussion:

In the discussion of the web presence, there was considerable dissatisfaction of the website existing at the time of the focus group meeting. Central is perceived to lack current media technology. Thus, the discussion led to establishing this goal as it pertains to attracting new members.

Benefits of improving the use of the web and social media technology include

To us as individuals:

- I will be able to access my church information on my home computer or other device.
- I will be able to explain and answer questionable web information to friends and neighbors about my church.
- I will be able to share information about church activities and current events.

To our church:

- Members will have access to the church's information, activities, and events on the website.
- The ability to express Central's identity of who, what, when, where, and why to prospective members
- Will attract new members

To the community/world:

- Identify Central's ministries and gifts
- Communicate Central's history and theological stance
- Present Central's vision, mission, and acceptance of all individuals

Obstacles which may tend to prevent us from reaching the goal:

1. Shortage of money to support the website and social media technology
2. Absence of a Content Manager to manage website
3. Being insensitive to those who are not computer savvy

Solutions which may help overcome the above obstacles:

- A. Provide budgetary funds to support a web presence.
- B. Allocate the necessary personnel time or employ a part-time Content Manager to keep website up to date.
- C. Provide written information by mail to individuals who aren't computer savvy.
- D. Use social media to communicate information faster and/or during an emergency.

Action Steps to help reach this goal could include:

- Allocate the necessary personnel time or employ a part-time Content Manager to maintain web presence who will
 - create Central's website to be as user friendly as possible,
 - use a very contemporary, functional website design, and

- improve communication through connection of social media technology with the website.

Additional Ideas from the Brainstorming Session

Let us not lose other issues/ideas that were generated in the brainstorming sessions which may be important to Attracting New Members for some such as:

- Increased presence at community events
- Reach out to visitors and invite them to return with follow-up
- Sunday School classes that publicize weekly topics
- Improve signage within church facilities
- Make coffee and welcoming time structured to be easier to meet people
- Utilize the child care center by inviting parents to worship
- Formalize the process of evangelizing
- Workshops/marriage groups for young adults
- Advertise using new approaches
- More group reporting on evangelism
- Research and target of Outreach toward evangelism
- Increased community involvement
- Utilize bulletin boards and TV screens to communicate to guests

Ensuring Operational Effectiveness

This Opportunity Area includes ideas that will help Central operate more effectively and efficiently so that Central is able to realize its Values, Vision, and Mission. The congregational survey data identified strong satisfaction with our facilities but concern about the need for building maintenance. There is overall dissatisfaction with communications. The congregation feels a need for much more information than is reliably and consistently provided. There also is a perception that the management of the Church needs improvement.

Operational Effectiveness Goal #1:

Implement clear and effective management of ministerial and support staff.

Discussion:

There is near unanimous agreement that the church would benefit from better guidance and organization of both the ministerial and support staff. The option of a “church administrator” was discussed. The current church constitution designates the senior minister as the Chief Administrative Officer. This group is of the opinion the Chief Administrative Office’s role includes:

- strategic planning
- policy setting and systems design, and
- managing and holding accountable persons in the operation of the church.

Many felt the Chief Administrative Officer role of accomplishing all three of these functions needs to be strengthened in the future. If the senior minister does not fulfill all three functions, the church will need to consciously evaluate and make adjustments accordingly.

Benefits of achieving the goal of clear and effective management include

To us as individuals:

- Less frustration
- Better stewardship of the church's resources
- Know where to go for information or decisions.
- Staff helps guide congregational members on their faith journey's.

To our church:

- Both the clergy and the congregation will have a better understanding of expectations.
- The church will be more effective and efficient in realizing our values, vision, and mission.
- The church better could focus better resources on the top priorities of the church and make more effective use of limited resources.

To our community/world:

- The church will be more successful in accomplishing our vision and mission.
- Enhance Central's ability to carry out its ministries to the world
- Better witness to the world

Obstacles which could hinder achieving this goal:

1. The senior minister may not have the skills or inclination to devote time to the tasks of administrative duties.
2. The Personnel Committee and Church leaders might have difficulty determining which staff person would be identified as being given the responsibility of managing and holding persons accountable, if not the senior minister.
3. The current staff may be uncomfortable with the designation of a person other than the senior minister to have the authority to hold people accountable.
4. The constitution of the church may need to be changed.

Solutions which will help overcome one or more of the obstacles:

- A. Clearly designate the person with the responsibility and authority required to hold people accountable.
- B. Conduct an annual review of the senior minister, with input from the congregation in a meaningful format agreed upon by the senior minister and Personnel Committee.
- C. Change the culture of the church so there is support for ministerial staff having clear goals from the congregation and having accountability to the congregation.
- D. Have well defined job descriptions for ministerial and support staff in a standardized format that will provide a tool for allocating staff resources and conducting evaluations.

Operational Effectiveness Goal #2:

The ministerial and administrative staff should create an annual operational plan that reflects the strategic plan.

Discussion:

There was much discussion about the benefits of having each staff member develop an annual operational plan. The 2001 strategic plan fell by the wayside and some of the staff were not aware of its existence at the beginning of the Visioning for a Faithful Future process. Having an annual operational plan was seen as a way to help the staff remain focused on the church's longer range plans which can be difficult when dealing with day-to-day activities. There also was discussion about how the operational plan could be helpful in staff evaluations, as there would be more specificity in expectations. The staff and church leaders may need some assistance in how to go about this process. By aligning our financial resources with our goals, our budgeting process could be improved. Budget decisions now seem to be made by long discussions without formal tools for decision making. There may need to be some realignment of staff and responsibilities to better reflect what the church is trying to accomplish.

Benefits of an operational plan reflecting the strategic plan include

To us as individuals:

- Members of the congregation would have greater comfort that we are being good stewards of our resources.
- We would have less frustration when working on church matters.

To our church and the community/world:

- The church's efforts and resources would be more closely aligned with what the congregation and staff want to accomplish.

Obstacles that might prevent our church from achieving this goal:

1. Lack of experience by ministerial staff and other church leaders in goal setting
2. Lack of desire for change or willingness to change the way the church has operated
3. Ministerial staff must focus on daily "fires" rather than longer range goal setting or operational systems.
4. Fear of accountability and failure

Solutions which will help overcome the obstacles:

- A. Secure a resource person to develop staff and Church leadership in goal setting.
- B. Have a staff and church leaders retreat to allow staff time for goal setting.
- C. Identify mentors with leadership and management skills to mentor the ministerial staff and church leadership.
- D. Allocate resources based on annual operational plans.
- E. Gain more information about resources within the church by "asset mapping". This approach focuses on the church's strengths rather than its weaknesses and includes formal surveys of the congregation to identify areas of expertise or talent.

Operational Effectiveness Goal #3:

Create an effective communication strategy for external and internal audiences.

Discussion:

Both the congregational survey and the focus groups voiced a desire for better communication in all aspects of the church. Examples of opportunities for improvement included the outdated website and inconsistent delivery of the chimes via e-mail. A weekly communication sent by some means to all congregants is imperative. A comprehensive communications audit which would evaluate what information needs to be communicated, to whom it needs to be communicated, and by what means it would be communicated should be conducted. Because this is perceived to be so important and such a problem, a team might need to be formed to conduct this audit and monitor this function.

Benefits of an effective communication strategy in the area of operations include

To us as individuals:

- Everyone would know more about activities of the church and be better informed about decision making in the church.

To our church:

- Visitors would be able to learn about Central.

Obstacles that might prevent our church from achieving this goal:

1. Inadequate resources
2. May not be a priority
3. Lack of consensus on how to solve the problem
4. Lack of clear leadership

Solutions which will help overcome the obstacles:

- A. Improve communication among small groups in the church and between these groups and the church at large.
- B. Create a lay group responsible for overseeing the church's communications.
- C. Conduct a "communications audit" which would look at all the audiences with whom the church is communicating, determine what needs to be communicated and evaluate which methods of communication would be most effective.
- D. Create a visible directory of groups, ministerial staff, and support personnel that is kept up to date and online (with necessary security protections).
- E. Allocate sufficient financial resources for communications.
- F. Have defined and specific communication strategies.

Additional Ideas Generated During Brainstorming

Ideas generated that were not incorporated into the goals, but which need to be preserved are:

- Focus resources on ministries that are most important.
- Conduct a gift inventory of the congregation to offer members an opportunity to use their talents in the best way and enable the church to call on members' talents.

- Consider restoring the weekly Chimes.
- Evaluate the Church's decision making process.
- Improve use of the church software (ACS).
- Develop and document church policy and procedures.

The focus group working on this Opportunity Area deemed it a priority to work on identifying and formulating three goals. Consequently, the group did not feel it had time to adequately specify action steps for any of the goals in this Opportunity Area. This is left to whoever is delegated the further development of each goal plan.

Appendix 1: Who Attends Central?

This appendix presents the responses of the 315 respondents to the 2012 congregational survey and 450 responses to the 2001 survey. Where lines are blank in the 2001 column the information was not available. Except for the two questions on how respondents want to receive information and whether they use social media, all numbers are presented as percentages to accommodate comparisons between the 2012 and 2001 surveys.

<u>Percent 2012</u>	<u>Percent 2001</u>	
I consider Central my church home:		
95	95	Yes
5	5	No
I am a member of Central:		
88	90	Yes
12	10	No
I have attended Central:		
7	6	Less than 1 year
8	15	1-3 years
11	11	4-6 years
14	10	7-10 years
19	20	11-20 years
41	38	More than 20 years
I usually attend Central:		
65	67	Every week
25	26	Several times a month
5	2	Once a month
4	1	At least 6 times a year
1	3	Less than 6 times a year
I usually attend:		
89		11:00 service
11		8:30 service
I am:		
42	40	Male
58	60	Female

<u>Percent 2012</u>	<u>Percent 2001</u>	
My age is:		
4	7	17 or younger
4	4	18-24
9	8	25-34
8	12	35-44
11	23	45-54
22	13	55-64
17	33	65-74
25		75 or older
My racial/ethnic group is:		
2	0	African American
0	0	Asian/Pacific Islander
96	96	Caucasian
0	0	Hispanic
1	3	Native American
1	1	Multi-racial
My highest level of education:		
1	4	0-8 grade
3	3	Some high school
14	14	High school graduate or GED
37	39	College graduate
45	40	Advanced degree
My marital status is:		
18	20	Single
6	6	Separated or divorced
9	8	Widowed
67	66	Married
My work can best be described as:		
5	12	Clerical
1	1	Farming
4	9	Homemaking
35	37	Manager/Professional
2	2	Manufacturing
1	1	Trade
43	25	Retired
8	13	Student
1	1	Unemployed

Percent 2012

Percent 2001

The approximate distance I travel from my home to church is:

5	3	Less than 1 mile
56	65	1-5 miles
26	22	6-10 miles
11	5	11-20 miles
2	4	More than 20 miles

My current home can best be described as:

84	84	House
1	3	Duplex
7	5	Condominium
8	8	Apartment
0	0	Mobile Home
0	0	Nursing home or group home

The number of people in my household, besides myself, is:

20	18	0
47	40	1
11	20	2
13	12	3
9	11	4 or more

My household can best be described as having:

20	24	One adult
3	3	One adult with child(ren)
47	42	Couple
25	26	Couple with child(ren)
4	5	More than 2 generations in the same household

My household's annual gross income is:

8	10	Less than \$25,000
16	23	\$25,000-\$49,000
18	20	\$50,000-\$74,000
15	20	\$75,000-\$99,000
18	10	\$100,000-\$124,000
9	6	\$125,000-\$149,000
5	4	\$150,000-\$174,000
11	7	\$175,000 or more

Percent 2012 Percent 2001

As a percentage of gross income, the approximate amount you give to God through Central is:

26	27	2% or less
24	28	3%-4%
20	24	5%-6%
11	8	7%-8%
13	9	9%-10%
6	5	More than 10%

As a percentage of gross income, the approximate amount you give to charities other than the church:

42	43	2% or less
26	27	3%-4%
14	21	5%-6%
7	3	7%-8%
6	4	9%-10%
5	2	More than 10%

I prefer to receive information from Central via: (respondent could choose more than 1 response)

17	The church web site
56	The Chimes
23	Central Life
21	Direct Mailings
33	e-mail
1	YouTube
5	Other

If available, I would use the following social media methods for communication with Central:
(respondent could chose more than one response)

83	Facebook
18	Twitter
4	Google plus
16	Other

The zip code where I live is:

24	32	40502
10	9	40515
10	7	40504
9	5	40509
6	9	40503
6	6	40505
6	6	40517
5	4	40508
4	4	40511
4		40513
16	18	Other

Appendix 2: Agree/Disagree Questionnaire Responses

Appendix 2 presents the detailed results of all of the 42 agree/disagree questions of the congregational survey. The following table presents the findings for each question. The response categories were 5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=neutral, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree, and DK=don't know or not applicable. Under the column headings of 1 through 5 are the numbers of individuals who chose that response category. The total number of persons responding to the survey was 315. The column headed "N" is the number of respondents who answered each question. The N for any specific question may be less than 315 due to some respondents failing to answer all questions or answering them as don't know/not applicable. The column with the heading "2012 Mean" is the mean score for the 2012 survey responses. The mean scores are calculated for each question for the responses to categories 1 through 5 divided by N for that question. Don't know/not applicable responses are not included in the mean calculation.

In 2001 a similar survey of the congregation was conducted as a part of the strategic planning process at the time. Twenty-three of the questions contained in the 2001 survey were repeated verbatim in the 2012 survey. Both surveys utilized the same response categories. The column with the heading "2001 Mean" presents the mean scores of those questions from the 2001 study. The last column with the heading "Difference 2001-2012" reports the difference in the mean scores between 2001 and 2012. In other words, it demonstrates how the ratings differ for the same items from 2001 to 2012. A positive number in the differences column means the 2012 mean score is higher (greater agreement) than the 2001 score. A negative number in the differences column indicates the 2012 respondents scored the question lower (less agreement) than the 2001 respondents. Only two questions resulted in a negative difference from 2001 to 2012.

Agree/Disagree Survey Questionnaire Responses, 2012 and 2001

	<u>N</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2012</u> <u>Mean</u>	<u>2001</u> <u>Mean</u>	<u>Difference</u> <u>2001-</u> <u>2012</u>
1. The worship service uplifts and strengthens me.	309	187	94	23	4	1	4.50	4.50	0
2. The sermons help me relate faith to daily life.	311	161	109	23	14	4	4.32		
3. The worship service appeals to persons of all ages.	292	86	100	75	24	7	3.80		
4. The worship music is of high quality.	310	243	48	15	4	0	4.71	4.70	0.01
5. Central is a welcoming congregation.	312	157	111	26	6	2	4.33		
6. Central has a clear sense of purpose.	302	115	112	58	14	3	4.07	3.90	0.17
7. Central is effectively reaching unchurched persons.	244	40	55	84	46	19	3.21	3.00	0.21
8. Opportunities are provided to help people in the community.	303	178	105	16	3	1	4.50	4.50	0
9. Central's outreach programs provide important services to persons throughout the world.	280	138	113	27	2	0	4.38		
10. Central helps me develop a meaningful Christian life.	306	152	119	29	4	2	4.36		
11. The groups in which I participate meet my needs.	261	141	79	32	7	2	4.34	4.00	0.34
12. I am willing to invite others to Central.	306	172	99	26	5	4	4.41	4.30	0.11
13. We have a strong music ministry.	300	238	46	13	2	1	4.73		
14 I feel that Central cares for my needs in times of crisis.	268	138	77	37	13	1	4.26		
15. Central helps me grow spiritually.	308	145	132	22	6	3	4.33		
16. Central has goals that guide its future directions.	267	73	106	66	14	8	3.83		
17. Sufficient fellowship opportunities are provided by Central.	299	100	116	52	26	5	3.94		
18. Central's outreach programs provide important services to persons within the community.	291	157	109	23	2	0	4.45		

	<u>N</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2012</u> <u>Mean</u>	<u>2001</u> <u>Mean</u>	<u>Difference</u> <u>2001-</u> <u>2012</u>
19. Christian education is an important aspect of the congregation's life.	303	157	112	26	5	3	4.37		
20. I am hopeful about the future of Central.	309	167	93	36	10	3	4.33	4.30	0.03
21. Central welcomes persons of diverse backgrounds.	305	214	73	13	4	1	4.63		
22. People at Central care about one another.	303	142	136	20	5	0	4.37	4.30	0.07
23. Sufficient recreational opportunities are provided by Central.	262	44	71	91	41	15	3.34		
24. The staff and congregation work well together.	266	99	103	49	13	2	4.07		
25. Central resolves conflicts in healthy ways.	209	59	72	53	17	8	3.75	3.80	-0.05
26. Central is open to trying new ideas.	271	82	112	51	23	3	3.91	3.90	0.01
27. Everyone at Central is kept informed of what is going on.	287	68	87	61	49	22	3.45	3.80	-0.35
28. Central's decision making processes consider all viewpoints.	246	61	93	52	29	11	3.67		
29. The ministers provide the kind of leadership this congregations needs.	294	114	101	52	19	8	4.00		
30. Central provides opportunities for lay persons.	280	129	120	26	4	1	4.33		
31. Leadership by laypersons is encouraged.	275	144	94	27	8	2	4.35		
32. Training is provided to those laypersons who are asked to do a job.	238	70	102	46	13	7	3.90	3.60	0.30
33. Central members are generally willing to serve.	269	70	139	49	10	1	3.99	3.80	0.19
34. The staff members work well together.	211	99	79	26	5	2	4.27	4.10	0.17
35. Central's nursery provides good care for babies.	156	100	46	8	1	1	4.56	3.80	0.76

	<u>N</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2012</u> <u>Mean</u>	<u>2001</u> <u>Mean</u>	<u>Difference</u> <u>2001-</u> <u>2012</u>
36a. Central does a good job of ministering to children.	263	165	81	13	4	0	4.55	3.80	0.75
36b. Central does a good job ministering to youth.	249	122	93	20	12	2	4.29	3.80	0.49
36c. Central does a good job ministering to young adults.	220	61	74	48	28	9	3.68	3.50	0.18
36d. Central does a good job ministering to middle-aged adults.	236	70	86	58	16	6	3.84	3.80	0.04
36e. Central does a good job ministering to older adults.	255	107	103	33	11	1	4.19	4.00	0.19
36 f. Central does a good job of ministering to women.	258	117	107	29	4	1	4.30	3.90	0.40
36g. Central does a good job ministering to men.	222	83	71	51	13	4	3.97	3.60	0.37

