

Although we'll have more to report at the Annual Meeting on December 1, I want to give you an update on how our spiritual strategic journey process is moving along thus far so you'll have more context for that report.

Those who study such things tell us that congregations need to renew their sense of purpose and direction every 7-9 years, as well as in transitional times such as changes in pastoral and staff leadership. With my arrival at the beginning of last year and Pastor Debbie's retirement this month, we certainly have sufficient catalytic events underway to merit such reflection, and we've actually been doing strategic thinking all year long.

You probably remember the "Prayer Triplet" process with which we began our strategic reflection in January. That was a very positive experience, and shortly thereafter we asked you to nominate persons to serve on our Strategic Leadership Team. The question posed was, "If God were to have some direction to give to our congregation, who are the persons you think would be most likely to hear it?"

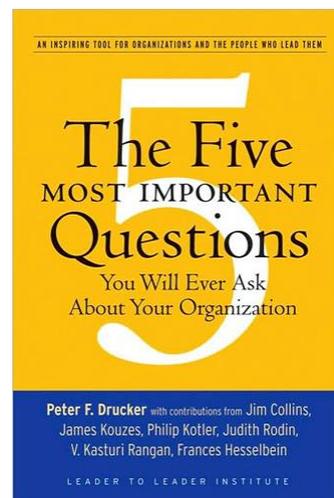
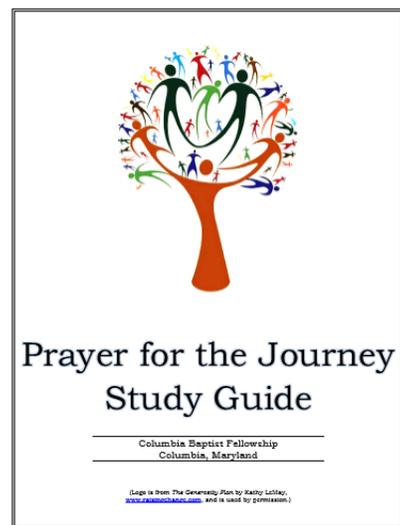
A number of persons were nominated, but other commitments prevented some persons from being able to undertake this task. Those nominated who were able to serve on the Strategic Team are nine: Lucille Barnum; Karen Canfield; Ben Davis; Janet Davis; Chima Ebinama; Steve Gore; Imani Henderson; Francine Johnson, and Sam Odulana.

The Strategic Team has solicited your input in several ways through the year, the first of which was the two reporting sessions they hosted to learn what God had told us through the Prayer Triplet experience. During the summer, the Team sponsored a congregational survey related to Children's Ministry, and then hosted a feedback session to discuss those responses. Early in the fall, the Team asked for your feedback on several "strategic questions"; and then most recently, they have studied your feedback that came through "the Letter to Columbia."

The Strategic Team has met about twice a month this fall. In addition to considering all this congregational feedback, the Team has studied Peter Drucker's famous book, *The Five Most Important Questions You Will Ever Ask about Your Organization*. Those questions are as follows:

1. What is Our Mission?
2. Who is Our Customer?
3. What does Our Customer Value?
4. What have been Our Results?
5. What is Our Plan?

We have reviewed the work our Transition Team did a couple of years ago on our Mission Statement. We have reviewed consultant George Bullard, Jr.'s materials, "Will Your Congregation Still Exist Ten Years from Now?" We have reviewed data from the 2010 Census. We have wondered about the needs we perceive in our facilities here at The Meeting House. And we have studied the results of a SWOT analysis that we did together earlier this year (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats).



Now, after all this research, the Strategic Team has developed initial summaries of all this data so as to discern possible **Big, Holy, Audacious Goals** for the next seven years—through 2020. We're trying to determine the central themes in what we've heard from you, and trying to listen carefully and deeply to the leadership of God's Spirit. The goal, after all, is not to decide what we want to do for the next seven years or so, but what God wants us to do.

What Kingdom needs and purposes exist that are within our sphere of influence and within our ability to meet—with God's empowerment? Where is the "sweet spot" that represents the confluence of our God-given Mission, the spiritual development of our members, and the needs of our neighbors?

Please continue to pray for and with the Strategic Team as we get closer to presenting our initial sense of these things. If you'd like to have copies of the summary documents that we've assembled over the year, I'll be glad to send them to you via email.

Please mark your calendar to be sure to join us on December 1!

Dave

