



Davis Community Church

Discover Your Gifts, Live Your Faith

Mission Study

February 2014

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MISSION STUDY TEAM

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PREFACE

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20).

As Davis Community Church lives into the Great Commission we are guided by our Vision Statement (2004) and Values (2006). The Mission Study Team believes that these statements still describe and serve our congregation well.

Our Vision

Davis Community Church is, and seeks to become more fully, a congregation of Christians growing as a community in our identities as beloved children of God and becoming beacons of that love in the world.

Our Values

In joyous response to the gifts of grace and love that God has given us in Jesus Christ, and in reliance on the Holy Spirit and our understanding of the scriptures, Davis Community Church seeks to embody: Love, Inclusiveness, Integrity, Engagement, Trust, Generosity, Stewardship Justice, Discernment, and Discipleship.

We are a progressive, inclusive congregation of Christians belonging to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). God has been at work through Davis Community Church since its founding in 1869. It took that small group of founding members 7 years to build, equip, and pay for the first church structure. Today, our church buildings are situated next to a growing, world class university. Many members affiliated with UC Davis have worked overseas and brought their interest in the outside world to the church. Because of the university, the community of Davis is multicultural, and multi-faith. The university continues to grow toward a capped

enrollment of 40,000 students. At the same time, Davis is seen as a very attractive retirement community and the “over 60’s” population is increasing. The actual city of Davis is currently restricted in size, bounded on three sides by farmland, and the fourth, by the Yolo Bypass.

Davis Community Church has a long history of social justice and mission throughout the world through the connectional Church. Locally, DCC has served the community of Davis not only through our church ministries, classes, event offerings, and facilities, but also through our congregants living Spirit-led lives and showing God’s love and care for both people and creation. We have sought to adapt and change to follow God as the culture and community change. That has led us in recent times to be more missional; as a church, intentionally stepping outside our doors into our community. No journey, especially a communal one, is without welcomes and departures. At this juncture the departure of Mary Lynn Tobin, who ministered with us as an associate pastor, co-pastor, and head pastor for 25 years, and the announced retirement of JoAnn Diel, our Minister of Congregational Care for 17 years, ushers us into a transitional time. The Mission Study is a chance to take a breath, examine who we are, and where God invites us to grow.

On the following pages we present findings from our Mission Study. While we identify no significant shift in direction, we do sense changes are needed as we continue to learn how to be a congregation of Christians in our postmodern, post Christian, multi-faith setting. The findings help articulate who we are and where God calls us. Each finding is presented with associated challenges and opportunities. This document contains frequent direct quotations from the congregation, individuals we interviewed, and groups with which we conversed. We listened to their words and wish to share some quotes as illustrations. Understanding the challenges and opportunities before us is important as we continue to move toward God’s vision for our congregation and invite a new pastor to minister with us.

None of the findings presented in this report would be possible without the deep and prayerful communications and discussions that the congregation, the ministries, Session, staff, and numerous groups have shared with our team. We offer them our heartfelt thanks.

Strong Worship and Great Music are Central to Our Faith Community

Current state

DCC offers two Sunday morning worship services, traditional reformed worship and a more contemporary second service. The same sermon is ably preached at each service offering both challenge and comfort.

“The most important thing I need is good preaching.”

“Sermons that give me practical ways to reflect God’s love.”

“Sermons that come from the heart,” sermons that are “tied to the real,”

Music at each service plays an important role in preaching, praying, and praising. The congregation overwhelmingly lists the strong music program as a highlight of DCC over the past decades.

“Music is at the forefront of what we do and must not be compromised”

Challenges

- Continuing the quality of articulate and challenging preaching that makes the Gospel come alive and relevant to the way we live our lives.

“...words of inspiration and encouragement from the pulpit...”

“Sermons that give me practical ways to reflect God’s love.”

- Supporting the music program with participation, physical space, and financial resources.

“...keep a strong music program and build on our reputation.”

“...maintain the music program and worship by joyful praise.”

“I believe the Lord would love to be praised much more by much more music during the service.”

Opportunities

- “Sing new songs” as the highly valued music program navigates the future and interprets the past.
- Invite and encourage expression of the gift of music among the members of our community and support those who step forward to share their gifts.
- Become more deeply aware of the world wide Christian church both in its music and its mission.

Ministry and Service are an Important Part of Our Individual and Corporate Faith Journey

Current state

The congregations' responses cite ministry and service as a high priority. They point with pride to the Interfaith Rotating Winter Shelter, Monthly Community Lunches, the Gift Project, D Street Partnership with the Center for Families, Brown Bag Lunches, and many other forms of outreach.

"Continue to reach out to the poor and disenfranchised people of our community and offer them God's love as well as practical ways to improve their lives."

"I believe God is calling DCC to serve others...through outreach and mission."

The congregation recognizes that the missional/outreach activities must be balanced with care and nurture for our congregation through such programs as Stephen Ministry, Care Teams, classes for children, youth, and adults, as well as a variety of small groups. We seek to strike a balance between ministering outside our walls and caring for members.

"Continue to walk the tightrope between missional call and nurturing members."

"Outreach beyond our doors and nurture the people who are here."

Challenges

- Providing opportunities for exploring how service to others informs our individual faith journeys.
- Making the variety of service activities understandable and accessible to all congregants.
- Resourcing staff to numerous activities without over taxing them.
- Helping each other grow in our understanding of "ministry" and "service" until we recognize that we minister and serve every day of our lives.

Opportunities

- The congregational responses cite the need to minister to the needy, the unchurched, the disabled, the homeless, the mentally ill, the aging population, youth, families with young children, and a wide variety of other groups. However, making a shift from “ministry to...” to “ministry with...” will help move us from programs that are hierarchical to engagement of equals. DCC should rely less on programs and more on developing meaningful ways to build strong faith foundations and foster ministry in a changing world.
- Compelling service activities or ministries can increase our contact with groups that the congregation has expressed interest in “ministering with” such as college students, young families and children.
- Work with our campus ministry, CA House, in this common time of transition. We can discover what service or ministry might await us with DCC’s missional focus and CA House’s multi-faith context reigniting the partnership.
- The continuing modernization of our facilities will provide better utilization of our campus for all.
- Re-engage the practice of Sabbath keeping by taking time to rest, reflect, enjoy, and be. It’s not all about doing.

Strong Faith Foundations are Needed as We Serve

Current state

Worship and education form the faith foundation from which we serve. In service we encounter the living Word further informing our faith foundations. DCC seeks to be missional, which requires each of us to be fed and nurtured through worship and education so as to not lose our underlying motivation of serving God.

“It’s my hope that the mission and call of DCC will include supporting each individual with their personal spiritual growth.”
“Continued emphasis on deepening individual’s personal faith understanding through opportunities for spiritual direction and education. I would then feel better equipped to go out into the world firmer in my faith.”

Challenges

- Reclaiming the word “evangelism” and articulating our faith with an inclusive, progressive voice is essential as we grow into our missional approach – equipped confidently to invite others to come and see.
- Deepening our knowledge of Christianity, and strengthening our belief is cited by many. There is an articulation of yearning for greater spiritual grounding.
“Deeper grounding in the ‘Story’ through Bible study, perhaps in small groups so that I can understand ‘my story’ and others’ ‘story’ in light of God’s word.”

Opportunities

- The widespread yearning for “greater spiritual grounding” gives us the opportunity to refocus our hearts and our minds on our faith journey. This yearning also shows an openness to strengthening our faith in new ways. The Lenten Book project is an example of how the congregation is finding ways to grow together spiritually and become more effective in our ministry.
- Acts of service give us the opportunity for experiential learning and can be entry points to expanding our faith foundations.

Yearning for Community and Sense of Belonging Runs Deep in Our Congregation

Current state

Congregational responses reflect the need for “community,” “fellowship,” “connection”, and “belonging.” The need to “*do God’s work with others*” is a recurring desire.

“I need encouragement, courage, and direction. I don’t need to see the whole project completed; I need someone to go along one step at a time.”

“Love one another, pray for one another, support each other.”

“To care for one another as a community, we are called to deepen our relationships with one another and serve each other in times of need.”

Challenges

- Feeling isolated even though you participate in DCC activities.
“I have a concern that sometimes our focus has been strongly outward in the past[so] that some of our sense of connectedness and community has been lost.”
- Feeling disconnected in a congregation that may seem large to some who may find difficulty knowing where they “fit in.”
“After many years of DCC membership, I still do not feel connected.”
“After 10 years of DCC membership, I still do not feel connected to a group.”
- Caring for the well-being of our congregation while we also serve in the community.
“What do I need? Quite simply, I need love, love received and love given, love recognized and shared. I need all of you.”
- Informing and connecting can be difficult with the numerous activities and opportunities that exist.

Opportunities

- We must continue to find ways to help the congregation examine their gifts and call, and to connect them with others in the church.
- Many small groups already exist. We can continue to use small groups to help with “being known and belonging.”
“I need a small group of trusted others to know and hear my story. To help clarify for me God in every day decisions or situations so that I can respond accordingly.”
- Create safe environs in our groups and classes so that risking being known or engaging in a group is possible.
- Understand and remember the experience of coming into a congregation or new group takes risk and investment by individuals. Develop ways to honor and support new members and visitors.

Leadership Model Empowers an Energized Lay Leadership

Ministries

Current state

Eight ministries are commissioned by Session to implement the vision of DCC. Ministries are designed to provide the organizational resourcing for service activities to occur. Ministries are engaged and have a sense of energy, enjoyment and fulfillment in most aspects of ministry activity.

“Members of our ministry do seem to feel energized and members have expressed how much being part of the group and its energy has meant to them.”

“In general if the ministry members were not energized by this type of contribution, we wouldn’t be here.”

Some ministries find administrative matters less fulfilling or even “draining” but they are energized by the value of the accomplishments.

“Various members and supporters of [our] ministry find themselves energized by the activities more than by the business of this ministry.”

Challenges

- Providing clear articulation of the organizational structure of DCC to allow efficient allocation of responsibilities and resources.
- Helping ministries align the vision with clear objectives. This will allow ministries to focus, prioritize, and give rise to new activities or let go of activities as needed.

“Over the last six months we have been looking at ways to reduce the growing load of responsibilities we have, but we have not reached any consensus [on] activities to eliminate.”

Only one of the eight ministries identified a program that they were able to eliminate.

- Addressing the ongoing struggles of the children's and youth education ministries with staff resourcing/support. While laity has taken a larger role, proper resourcing and presence of professional staff is needed.
- Equipping the laity to engage more fully in service/ministry.
- Examining the ministry/Session and ministry/staff relationships and establish levels of support required for each ministry.

Opportunities

- Post an on-line list of contact persons for different activities that is current and accurate.
- Develop graphical aids and/or text that allows the congregation and visitors to understand how action groups, ministries, and Session are related and organized.
- Identify and explore interconnections between ministries to discover new opportunities and synergies.
- Design a ministry "Examen" that can be used to become aware of the spiritual movements in the ministry as well as help assess progress toward objectives.
- Gather or develop devotionals for use by Session Liaisons and Ministry Chairs and others for group meetings.

Session

Current state

Session is charged with discerning God's vision for DCC. As such, Session supports and assesses the work of the eight ministries. As the leadership, Session is charged with oversight of the life of the church. As the visioning body, Session continues to look for ways to reach beyond the walls of DCC.

Challenges

- Shepherding the congregation in times of transition.
 - Managing change so it is understandable by the congregation.
 - Strong communication with the congregation that provides a sense of purpose, direction, and instills confidence.

- Managing resources of DCC to be good stewards of the gifts we are given including our facilities, staff and finances.

Opportunities

- Exercise strong leadership by prioritizing activities DCC undertakes in alignment with our vision and our resources.
- Exercise strong leadership by interpreting new initiatives so that the congregation can own and participate fully.

Staff Play an Integral Role in All Ministries and Activities

Current state

DCC is blessed with a talented, committed and energetic staff. In most instances the staff report they are engaged and energized. Staff works hard to handle a variety of tasks with a limited number of job hours. Staff has excelled in being “the face of DCC”.

Staff has noted some confusion in understanding job descriptions. Job assignments are allowed to evolve as staff’s gifts are revealed. Over the course of time, job duties and boundaries have become ambiguous and sometimes overlapping. While serving from gifts is important, it is also important to maintain clear job descriptions to ensure full function of the office is maintained and lines of responsibility are clear. The part time nature of the staff handicaps cohesion as not all personnel see each other on a regular basis.

"Staff is [not] overly deluged with work, but that job duties and responsibilities are not often clear."

"...constantly has to reprioritize, but believes that the work gets done."

Challenges

- Developing and executing a plan to cover the responsibilities and duties of the Minister of Congregational Care in order to continue compassionate and skillful care to all segments of our congregation.
- Conducting an inventory of all the functions required in the office and providing appropriate job descriptions to ensure accountability.
"there are probably enough staff positions but sometimes tasks are taken up because we have always done it."
- Recognizing that there are limitations to the level of staffing that DCC can afford.

Opportunities:

- A comprehensive review of job descriptions and duties will help resolve ambiguities and inefficiencies. The Interim Pastor has begun this work, but it is an ongoing task.
- Head(s) of staff can focus and clarify priorities, assess appropriate level of staffing required to support priorities and align functional responsibilities accordingly.
- Team building and spiritual nurturing may help with professional growth and succession.
"would like to see some authentic team building with the incorporation of some devotional time."
- A more active laity can supplement some staff duties, but not all.

Stewardship and Finance are Ever Important as We Move Forward

Current state

DCC is blessed to have a long record of sound financial footing. We carry no debt and cover annual expense. Deferring facility maintenance, trimming ministry budgets, staff, and office hours are ways we have helped match annual expense to income. In addition to our operational budget, we are currently in the midst of a facilities modernization capital campaign, Shining Light Open Arms. Phase 1 (sanctuary roof) and 2 (children's education wing) have been a success, although project costs exceeded original estimations. The facilities modernization continues to move forward with Phase 3 (sanctuary) so that we can effectively utilize the wonderful campus that previous generations (Builder (1901-1925) and Silent (1926-1945)) have bequeathed to us. The timing of Phase 3 is not yet defined.

Challenges

- Understanding that giving is less influenced by Christian tradition and more by the national economic landscape in more recent generations (e.g. Generation X (1965-1979), Millennial (1980-2000), Generation Z (2001-present)).
- Sustaining financial viability is a concern, particularly in regards to deferred facility maintenance and improvements. Church researchers suggest that it takes approximately six pledges from new members of more recent generations to replace the financial contribution of one member from the Builder or Silent generations. Based upon this research and giving trends, the continued growth of DCC internal and outreach initiatives could place DCC's sound financial footing at risk.
- Taking into account realistic staffing costs that come with the growth of internal and external outreach initiatives.

- Deferring maintenance has resulted in increased cost of eventual repair. Moving forward the budget must contain a line item that reflects the actual cost of facility maintenance. Deferring maintenance should not be seen as a primary mechanism to balance the budget.

Opportunities

- Strong faith foundations include a strong faith-based understanding of giving. Where the heart and head are engaged, the financial support naturally follows.
- DCC must commit to growing its endowment through major gift and planned giving fundraising. Planned giving should be a larger part of our church culture and resourced to address the additional planning, negotiation and counsel that this type of gifting requires. Endowment for facilities maintenance will help reduce deferred maintenance.
- Our Missional focus may present new opportunities to make service activities partially self-funded and/or create options for community partnerships. However, we must be aware of the true costs of our activities such as facility costs and staff costs.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In developing this report, your Mission Study Team is drawn again to a vision of our congregation which is daily growing in its identity as beloved children of God. The report findings all point to preparing ourselves, our staff, our facilities – our “infrastructure” – to more fully engage with God in becoming beacons of light, welcoming the lost, the confused, the alienated to a new way of being in the world. DCC will be configured to experiment and grow into whatever church is to be in this place and time, prepared to move forward into the future.

Life and purpose are renewed because of the love of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit at work among us. We seek a pastor/head of staff gifted to join with us in this journey. “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah 29:11 – 13)

ATTRIBUTES WE SEEK IN OUR NEW PASTOR

1. Ability to preach Biblically grounded sermons that speak to the places in which we live today.
2. Progressive, inclusive theology.
3. Demonstrated commitment to outreach and pastoral care.
4. Demonstrated effectiveness in area of spiritual formation.
5. Fosters growth of lay leadership.
6. Skill at building personal relationships.
7. Belief in collegial rather than top-down leadership style
8. Ability to communicate with and supervise staff. Ability to evaluate staff and to give clearly defined responsibilities.
9. Understanding of financial challenges of mainline churches in the 21st century, and the ability to address those challenges.

MISSION STUDY TEAM PROCESS

Weekly meetings Mondays

- 7:00 to 9:00 pm starting first week of October, 2013
- Election of Mission Study Team (leaders), Deborah Luthi, Chair, Joe Yun, Information Technology expert, JoAnn Cannon, Secretary (Session liaison)
- Review of Presbytery guidelines for mission studies, review of existing models and examples of mission studies, provided by our Presbytery Liaison Mark Swanson.
- Gathering of demographic data on our community
- Review of relevant documents informing our study, including the Leadership retreat report from this fall, the 2011 “Living our Vision” study commissioned by Session and the small group meetings with numerous members of the congregations.

Gathering input from the congregation

Selection of three questions guiding us to explore our mission

Pastors contextualize those questions in a series of three sermons

Series of three sermons and responses

November 3: “God is calling; Don’t Hang up” The question: *Where is God calling DCC as we move towards the future?”*

November 10: Reminded folks of the 10 values DCC has embraced in vision statement and asked; *Which value does your life express and in which value is God inviting you to grow?*

November 17: *What do YOU need to be equipped to be faithful to our vision to become beacons of light in the world?*

Responses submitted by congregation in writing in the service, online or in a drop in session after each service at which folks could meet with members of the MS Team, (vast majority of the responses written)

Input from other sources

Questions posed to the ministries.

Interviews with all staff by Mission Study Team members.

Ministry reports received in early December.

Discussion and discernment of what we learned from the information gathered so far, including three questions to congregation, staff interviews, ministry responses.

Meeting between services with new members and other recent participants in worship and the life of DCC.

Question to new participants:

- How are you connecting?
- Are you finding places to grow spiritually?
- What do we need to know to help you grow spiritually and to use your gifts and talents for ministry at DCC?

Brief meeting with Session at December Session meeting.

January 13, 2014: meeting with Session.

Meeting with Facilities Modernization Task Force.

Meeting with the Personnel Committee.

Consultation with Presbytery Liaison on next steps with Presbytery.

Synthesis of data, discernment.

Final of the report delivered to Session by the end of February 2014.

Visual representation of DCC past and future.