

St. Luke's Futures Task Force Final Report

April 2024



BE THE CHURCH
BE ST. LUKE'S

★ Help Shape Our Future ★

*Shoot for the moon,
land among the stars!*

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Chairperson's message

The write-up that follows is the result of an exciting collaboration between our congregation and the Futures Task Force team. This report is insightful and compelling due to two main factors: the willingness and honesty with which the congregation shared their hopes and dreams; and the passion, effort, and camaraderie of the Futures Task Force. This report is a gift to the future of St. Luke's in the values it highlights and the visions it paints.

I feel blessed for the opportunity to be a part of this work and I am so thankful for:

- ★ the personal invitation (you'll read much more about the power of "invitations" throughout this report) I received from Rev. Michele Kaminsky to join this team;
- ★ the leadership of Michelle Mallory as she chaired the Futures Task Force through most of 2023 and positioned the team to pivot to implementing the listening sessions;
- ★ the partnership, energy, and laughs from my fellow task force members who took the ideas of the Appreciative Inquiry process, presented by Rev. Sallie Suby-Long & Paul Kirk, and created & executed a program that resulted in this report. (the appendix includes the names of all my teammates and more about the team);
- ★ the people throughout the church who - while not formally on the Task Force - enabled our execution of the listening sessions, as well as of this report: Alan Babcock, Jim Ramsey, Stephanie Kirk, Ken Fong, Sharon Oliver, Cassy Meier, and Eileen Long;
- ★ the insights, feedback, and heart-felt encouragement from Paul Kirk, Sam Leahy, Rev. Liza Stoltz-Hanson, Rev. Michele Kaminsky, & Rev. Sallie Suby-Long; and
- ★ last - and by no means least - to the more than 170 members and friends-of-St-Luke's who took the time to share their hopes and dreams for this very, very special place.

With much gratitude,
Chris Sheridan
4/17/2024

Summary

Why did we do this: During 2023, the year when we celebrated our 40th anniversary, it was recognized that not only did we want to celebrate the past, but we also wanted to establish a foundation on which we can plan for the future. To this end, The Futures Task Force, and the resulting Appreciative Inquiry process, was established to hear the voice of the congregation regarding what is valued in our current environment and what is envisioned for the future.

Call to Action: St. Luke's team leaders, staff, clergy, and Executive Team needs to understand the congregation-values and visions presented in this report in order to inform the evolution of church ministries, programs, and financial strategy. These details also provide the congregation at-large with information to consider regarding what values and visions most strongly resonate with them, and where they can direct their time, talents, and resources.

The Appreciative Inquiry Process: By the Numbers: Over the course of five months, 171 people joined one of 22 listening sessions and shared more that 800 hopes and dreams regarding what they value here at St. Luke's and what is envisioned for St. Luke's. The people who attended these sessions were both new members as well as long-time members, and they spanned all age-groups.

Values & Visions: Based on the questions asked in each listening session, the values and visions of the congregation centered on the following three themes:

1. St. Luke's welcoming and engaging environment, along with programs and practices that are exciting, impactful, and strongly resonate	
Continue to support ...	Consider ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ sacred and holy moments ➤ the genuineness and authenticity at St. Luke's ➤ a sense of belonging & inclusion ➤ multi-generational aspects of the church community ➤ being invitational with one another ➤ the vast array of music ministries ➤ making a difference in our community ➤ addressing social justice issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ enhancing the ways we share fellowship opportunities with the congregation ➤ providing additional small-group and education opportunities ➤ additional ways of inviting people to all facets of St. Luke's ➤ implementing radical hospitality & inclusiveness ➤ growing Brave Spaces ➤ enhancing the care and support of congregants in need ➤ ensuring a vibrant youth program ➤ enhanced and refreshed worship services

2. St. Luke's connection with our greater community	
Continue to support ...	Consider ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ making a difference in the community through diverse outreach efforts ➤ active participation in community outreach ➤ enabling deep mission and ministry opportunities ➤ openness of our building and our programs to the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ making our presence known in the community ➤ expanding faith leadership in our community ➤ increasing the ways we grow and equip people to serve in the community ➤ growing membership and attendance through: finding new ways to attract young people and families; and meeting people where they are

3. St. Luke's best use of our financial and non-financial resources

Continue to support ...	Consider ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ using our building to support the community ➤ engaging the volunteer power of the congregation ➤ using our volunteer and financial resources to do mission work ➤ Financial transparency ➤ coordination across all staff and teams with the use of resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ additional financial transparency detail ➤ planning for a capital campaign to enable taking care of our property ➤ appropriate compensation levels for staff and Clergy ➤ being OK with saying “no” to initiatives that we may not have the funding for ➤ additional education opportunities on how the congregation can give more, and give in different ways ➤ alternative revenue sources from the use of the building

Introduction

What is in this report?

The Futures Task Force, and the resulting Appreciative Inquiry process, was established to hear the voice of the congregation regarding what is valued in our current environment: where we are, who we are, and how God is present within our community. Then, to look into the future by describing a vision of how we can bridge the best of what “is,” with the best of what “can be.”

This report contains the themes heard from the congregation. The questions that were used to elicit the values and vision of the congregation centered on the themes of:

- welcoming and engaging environment;
- programs and practices that are exciting, impactful, and strongly resonate with the congregation;
- connection with the greater Highlands Ranch and South Metro community; and
- best use of our financial and non-financial resources.

What isn't in this report?

- This report does not commit St. Luke's to taking specific theological or social stands, offering specific programs, or to spending monies on specific initiatives. As stated earlier, the contents of this report will act as a guide to future decision making by St. Luke's leadership (e.g., staff, clergy, Exec Team, team leaders, etc.)
- This report neither lists-out the specific wording of all 800+ individual hopes and dreams, nor indicates who-said-what in the listening sessions. Instead, it groups like-ideas together into 20+ themes.
- This report does not lay out a specific road-map or time-line of how to get from where we currently are to where we may want to go in the future. Instead, it highlights what makes St. Luke's such a special place, along with what could make it even more special. And these themes will then be used by the Executive Team and other church leaders to inform the future evolution of St. Luke's, and to ensure alignment with what the congregation values.

What approach was used to gather this information?

The **Appreciative Inquiry (AI)** process engages our community in a spiritual practice of deep listening that opens a fresh sense of the presence of God in St. Luke's. In the process, we discover we are participating in something bigger than ourselves. We do this by creating intentional time for deep listening which is a process of spiritual discernment in community.

A crucial component of executing a successful Appreciative Inquiry is to orient the process around the principles of **positive psychology**.

Positive psychology is a branch of psychology that focuses on the scientific study of positive experiences, traits, and environments that contribute to human flourishing and well-being. Positive psychology seeks to understand the factors that lead to a fulfilling and impactful community, rather than solely focusing on identifying and fixing perceived dysfunction within the community.

Positive psychology explores traits that lead to passion, enthusiasm, engagement, and strengths within the community, with the goal of promoting optimal functioning and enhancing the purpose, mission, and vision of St. Luke's.

Appreciative Inquiry utilizes positive psychology by providing a strengths-based approach to organizational development that focuses on identifying and amplifying what is working well within St. Luke's rather than focusing on the church's perceived problems, weaknesses, and/or dysfunctions..

The Appreciative Inquiry is made up of the following four steps, and this report covers the Discovery and the Dream steps only:

1. **Discovery:** Where we appreciate the best of what currently is. Our plan here is to honor who we are and who we have been along with developing topical focus areas, design questions for our community, identify and train facilitators and plan and schedule listening sessions with our community. The ideal size is 10-12 participants with 2 facilitators. The goal is to be flexible with the setting of these sessions, like meeting in people's homes and organically fostering community. Facilitators are trained volunteers to ensure each session is focused and handled appropriately.
2. **Dream:** Determine what we are called to do. This is done through facilitating the listening sessions. Answers will be documented so the Futures Task Force can analyze the data and responses from the listening sessions to make connections with patterns and common themes to share with stakeholders across St. Lukes

3. **Design:** Based on the dreams and aspirations identified in the previous phase, laity teams, clergy, and staff can set informed goals, create action plans, allocate resources, and identify specific steps to move closer to the desired outcomes of the community at St. Luke's.
4. **Destiny:** The final phase involves implementing the plans developed in the design phase and taking action to bring the envisioned future into reality. This often requires commitment, collaboration between laity, clergy, and staff, along with ongoing evaluation and adjustment to ensure progress toward the desired goals.

Throughout the Appreciative Inquiry process, there is a focus on positive dialogue, collaboration, and empowerment, which can help strengthen relationships within St. Luke's and foster a sense of shared purpose and commitment to realizing a brighter future.

Detailed Learnings from the sessions

Categorization

The 800+ values, hopes, and dreams shared throughout this process have been categorized into three broad areas:

- What is a **welcoming and engaging environment** at St. Luke's today? This will inform how laity, clergy, and staff are mobilized when engaging with the congregation and the wider community. This highlights the current set of **programs and practices that strongly resonate** with the congregation.
- What does **connectivity with our greater community** look like when it is healthy? This enables the integration of what community connection looks like into our action and engagement activities with the greater community.
- How can we **prioritize and utilize all of our resources** to meet our churches and community's needs? This focuses not only on the financial resources, but also on the non-financial resources such as our congregation's time & talents.

And within each of these three broad categories above, we describe what the congregation said they:

- value about the **current state** of St. Luke's; and
- hope & dream for the **future**.

Welcoming, engaging, and inspirational environment

What we value

During the work of the Future's Task Force, scores of responses were shared and recorded as part of the Appreciative Inquiry Process about how St. Luke's can continue to be a welcoming and inspirational congregation.

This includes how St. Luke's has been involved with and experienced a welcoming and engaging environment and when the St. Luke's community has felt especially energized and enthusiastic about the church. This identifies how St. Luke's fosters an especially welcoming community for new visitors and existing participants, as well as identifying the characteristics of St. Luke's when participants in the church are feeling enthusiastic and energized in the community.

We received very similar answers to these questions. Naturally, what participants felt enthusiastic and energized about are very similar to building and experiencing a welcoming environment at St. Luke's.

- Sacred and holy moments
- Sense of belonging, inclusion, genuineness and authenticity
- Multi generational
- Invitational engagement
- Music
- Engaged in the life and community of St. Luke's

It was evident from the listening sessions that members of St. Luke's treasure **sacred and holy moments**. Participants want to see and experience more holy moments.

Community members share meaningful occasions like Lent, Easter, Christmas, and other special celebrations. These sacred holidays, celebrations and holy moments are instrumental in creating a welcoming environment at St. Luke's.

Numerous community members recall holidays and holy moments as their way of starting their engagement with St. Luke's. It is the welcoming environment, spiritual presence, and open environment at these occasions that help individuals feel welcomed into St. Luke's. One participant shared that they began coming during the Advent season since the Christmas pageant was open for everyone and continued to come as they felt welcomed and saw that St. Luke's was a good fit for their kids.

In addition to liturgical holidays, there are other sacred and holy moments like Baptisms, Scout Sunday, and Bible Sunday for third graders. Participants shared that when they saw numerous baptisms at St. Luke's they knew they wanted to have their children baptized at St. Luke's. This is creating a welcoming and inviting environment. It is important to recognize the breadth of sacred and holy moments at St. Luke's; they are not always holidays or when you would expect them.

The St. Luke's community loves to experience sacredness in many ways such as the Christmas Eve candle lighting, beautiful music moments, and symbolic opportunities in the worship services. Participants in the listening sessions expressed memorable experiences like placing stones in water, using flash paper for Ash Wednesday, hearing personal stories in sermons, being part of baptisms, connecting to the beauty of nature, celebrating St. Luke's 40th anniversary, and recognizing veterans with the Quilt of Valor each year.

Members said they welcome the unexpected connections of the spirit and the quiet, reflective moments they have at St. Luke's. Members gratefully appreciate the unlimited music moments at St. Luke's and believe that holy moments like these set a rhythm for life, deepen spiritual meaning, and connect them in the community.

Consistently throughout the listening sessions, participants shared a large reason they felt welcomed at St. Luke's was because the environment was **genuine and authentic**. This meant that participants felt safe and welcomed through their first handful of visits at St. Luke's. One participant in the listening sessions shared; "...there was a spirit we felt when we walked in, it was genuine in community." Other key points related to the genuineness and authenticity at St. Luke's is that the welcoming never seemed superficial, the clergy made a point to introduce themselves, and never seemed preachy.

Visitors and attendees feel welcomed regardless of where they are in their spiritual walk. St. Luke's meets people where they are in their spiritual journey, as opposed to expecting every person to conform to a prescribed form of spirituality. We value that a radically diverse set of people finds St. Luke's to be home, and that so many people recognize themselves in our community of faith. The current statement of **inclusion**, as found on our website, aligns with what was shared among participants in the listening sessions.

In terms of creating a welcoming environment and maximizing enthusiasm at St. Luke's, there is a strong **sense of belonging** felt within the church. It is personal for community members and they believe St. Luke's is a place where they can be who they are and not be judged. Members feel the freedom to become as involved as they want to be. Participants love being invited to share their talents and expertise and feel valued and recognized when they do.

The St. Luke's community is grateful "when someone reaches out and invites their presence and engagement." It was evident from the individual comments that members know they matter and that someone believes in them. There is a willingness to be vulnerable. This includes visitors being welcomed, and not feeling like they are being talked over, and invited into deeper conversation in a way that is organic, not in a way that is prescriptive or overly structured.

A strength of St. Luke's in creating a welcoming environment and driving a sense of belonging is the **multi-generational** aspect of the church community. St. Luke's is a safe place to bring your kids, allow them to ask questions, make friends, and grow. Welcoming children into the sanctuary encourages multi-generational participation. It is a community where participants know their family is taken care of and that a community of people know and care about you.

There are specific ministries for different generations and age groups; family ministries including children and youth ministries, and Seniors at St. Luke's in addition to ministries that can bring different age groups together.

There is a sense of pride among the St. Luke's community that they are part of such a vibrant church. Feeling accepted is of great value to them and they want to be asked to serve. "St. Luke's helps us to realize there are good people in the world." St. Luke's members feel part of the church when they are asked to participate in sacred worship experiences like reading scripture, serving communion, and serving on ministry teams.

St. Luke's is at its most welcoming when the community is **invitational** with one another. This connects individuals at varying levels of engagement to St. Luke's with the opportunity for deeper connection through participating in a ministry, fellowship, or small group. A consistent theme in participants' recollection of when they felt engaged at St. Luke's is the personal invitation they received to connect more deeply in the church.

It was shared that invitations are most impactful when the personal invitations come from various members in the St. Luke's community, including laity as well as clergy and staff. Everyone has the opportunity to build an invitational environment at St. Luke's. "Personal invitations put the ideal of hospitality into action."

Our personal invitations are balanced with an appreciation that the community is not pushing visitors to commit to St. Luke's or become a member so they can engage at their pace. This creates authenticity and genuineness at St. Luke's.

Music is the language of the spirit in our community. Members love the power and evocativeness of the full musical experience at St. Luke's. Music helps our members connect to each other, their faith, and their souls. Additionally, St. Luke's music and arts programs allow participants to serve and share their talents for a sacred music ministry.

One member said, "I like it when music is big and moving," while others valued the power of the quiet and introspective music. St. Luke's members believe that music is a connection to the Divine, to prayer, to celebration, and to enriching our experiences of faith and community. For many, those experiences are strengthened through the Christmas Cantata, Advent celebrations, Lent, Ash Wednesday observances, Good Friday, and Wesley Players productions. A member expressed the following sentiments; "Christmas Eve services [with] candles and singing Silent Night, Rev. Sallie walking out with the candle, Dr. Jim singing "O, Holy Night," and watching the sanctuary fill with candle light is one of the top five most beautiful things I've ever seen." The members of St. Luke's believe music offers them many powerful experiences that forever enrich them.

Frequently, attendees at the listening sessions expressed a heartfelt sentiment for missions and service and shared, "We want to do things beyond ourselves to have an impact in the world." Our members want to **make a difference in the community** in significant ways.

Participants viewed the opportunity to attend and participate in Monday Lunches and Christmas in the Park programs as a privilege. With grateful hearts, the St. Luke's community loves to serve, and in the discussions with Task Force members, they referenced many service projects ongoing in our community and beyond.

Participants described outreach opportunities like our long history of mission work with Pura Vida in Guatemala. Youth summer mission trips, and their volunteer work at Warren Village were so rewarding and impacting their desire to serve. It is a blessing that "everyone rolls up their sleeves and helps out."

A St. Luke's member described the spirit of service and outreach so well: "St. Luke's is not a congregation that sits in the pews and goes home." Matthew 18:20 proclaims "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." (NRSV)

In the Futures Task Force listening sessions, many people shared their passion for "starting bold new initiatives" and "pushing the envelope" to **address social justice issues and to respond to needs in our community** and in the world. This value was further reflected in comments such as "I like it when we don't shy away from difficult topics" and "I like things that take courage, like really naming the need

for social justice.” One person painted a bold vision of becoming “a center for social justice in the south metro area.” These voices can come from small group discussions, classes, service projects, events, as well as from the pulpit.

People shared their regard for being innovative and not being afraid to try new ministries. Some examples included Monday Lunches, CSE Brave Spaces, FREE, We Don’t Waste, Renewed Treasures, HAAT Force, and Feeding of the 5,000. In our community, there is a clear preference for ‘being engaged beyond listening.’ Several individuals stated the importance of taking actions that help St. Luke’s fully live our foundational scripture, Micah 6:8, that says “What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” A participant confidently said, “This verse is St. Luke’s.”

What we envision

St. Luke's can increase the ways we provide a welcoming environment, in which we inspire the congregation. Themes include: enhancing fellowship, small-groups, and education; being invited; being radically hospitable; enhancing support of those congregants in need; growing and revitalizing the youth program; refreshing or enhancing worship services; and expanding our spiritual leadership.

Enhancing the ways we share **fellowship opportunities** with the congregation was a strong vision-statement heard during many of the listening-sessions. Knowing what small groups are offered is desired. During Sunday worship, people see names of team leaders or staff on the slides, however, not everyone knows who these people are, perhaps a one page list of the teams and staff with photos of the leaders would help. Providing a one-page schematic of all the teams, their leaders, their jobs, and volunteer opportunities was envisioned.

Providing **additional small group and education opportunities** is also a recurring theme heard at the sessions. The types of small group and education opportunities are varied and include: providing small groups that bridge the current gap between youth and senior ministries; offer multi generational bible studies where adults can attend with their children; enhancing new members classes to include tours of the building and introduction to key members of the staff, and inviting existing members to these classes (because they may learn something new too); and creating a young singles only social opportunity.

The idea of **being invited** was highlighted as a foundational component in creating a welcoming environment. This invitation can take the form of being into small groups, music and arts programs, volunteer activities, or leadership teams. The more this invitation can be made personally or one-on-one, the more effective it can be. People value community and knowing each other. One suggestion is to encourage the use of name tags, as well as using our databases for personal outreach

calls to congregants who are not currently involved in one of the teams or ministries. Existing social groups (e.g., itch to stitch, men in community) can be recruited to make these calls annually. Also, it was recognized that the more we can find out what skills and talents someone has, and match them up with an opportunity to use those skills and talents, the more powerful this “invitation” can be.

St. Luke's has a history of fostering **radical hospitality** both within the St. Luke's congregation and with the larger community to which we belong. It became evident in the listening sessions that we must be clear in communicating what radical hospitality means and how that influences our **stance on inclusiveness**. It is envisioned that we lift-up and support the work currently being done by various teams across the church as it applies to these definitions.

Another area of vision was to grow the Brave Spaces presence, and be truly known as a group (and a church) that understands and tackles **social justice issues**, as well as a group that is relevant to the issues-of-the-day. Both this idea of expanding Brave Spaces and the inclusion statement are but two facets of CSE. The idea that CSE could be further marketed and expanded to those outside the church.

Having St. Luke's enhance the **care and support of congregants in need** was also highlighted. The diverse set of possibilities spanned: supporting the deaf community by having a service where an ASL interpreter was on hand; inviting those with special needs to take part in teams as well as the worship service; and expanding the visitation of the elderly, sick, and/or homebound.

A healthy and vibrant youth program was a clear vision statement expressed by the congregation. The various facets of how this could look include: connecting older congregants with youth so that the young people know there are adults (other than their families) who know them by name and who care for them; inviting youth to take part in more of the church service, mission activities, and teams; creating additional music and arts opportunities for youth; and educate parents of high school seniors that volunteering at church can count as volunteer hours for graduation; be creative in new and fun family-ministry events. It was understood that the “feeder” into the youth program must also be a focus - whether that be pre-K children in Little school, or those elementary school children who attend Sunday School.

An **enhanced and refreshed worship service** was heard across many of the listening sessions as an opportunity for growth. Part of the future vision involved having the members of staff and clergy be more representative of the church's demographic (specifically, having more men in leadership positions, on staff, or behind the pulpit) so that people in the congregation can see themselves in these positions. Also, having more people attend worship services was desired. This could take many forms: moving to a single service with more attendees, doing a radical refresh of one of the services to possibly attract

new attendees who are looking for something different; adding a Saturday evening service; and inviting more people to participate in the services in various roles.

Connection with our greater community

Connection with our great community means answering; how does St. Luke's connect with our greater community outside of the church? This can be within Highlands Ranch, the southern metro Denver region, or in the world. Connection with our greater community can and will take on different forms, including how we can bring the greater community into St. Luke's and our physical space, as well as how St. Luke's creates a presence in the community.

What we value

Connection with our greater community is intertwined with the values and mission of St. Luke's. Members and participants of St. Luke's feel enabled and equipped to do great work in the larger community in a number of different ways.

Diverse outreach opportunities: Regarding connecting with the larger community, St. Luke's values and has a legacy of offering a diverse array of outreach and missional opportunities, both in the local community, region, and around the world. Outreach opportunities meet critical needs in our community as well as equipping participants and volunteers with the opportunity for personal growth and self-awareness.

Additionally, a repeated passion that came up in the listening sessions was the value of St. Luke's actively participating in the work in the community, and being the hands of service, not simply contributing toward a cause. St. Luke's has a legacy and reputation of volunteering enthusiastically, giving of time and energy in addition to resources. This happens with initiatives that are led by St. Luke's as well as initiatives led by a coalition of churches, or secular groups within the community and beyond.

Active participation in community outreach: Participants shared the sentiment that as a community, "St. Luke's can do more as a group than as a collection of individuals. Supporting St. Luke's enables us to make a larger impact in the community together. St. Luke's is much more than Sunday morning services."

The value of multi-generational volunteerism is celebrated. There are opportunities for families and children to serve and learn how to serve within St. Luke's. This is a unique offering to equip different age groups to serve and volunteer. This occurs within existing Family Ministries at St. Luke's, as well as what is available through the Missions Team.

Enabling Deep Mission and Ministry Opportunities: St. Luke's was also described as a "Stream of Service. Sometimes we have to go upstream to see the cause of problems in our community and around

the world, then we have to figure out how to solve problems.” This reflects a commitment to enable community members to take initiative to identify and participate in solutions at the root cause of societal injustice.

An example of this is through The Center for Spiritual Engagement’s Brave Spaces group and the resulting legislative action team. This is just one example of laity, staff, and clergy using the support to create life changing outreach, missional, and ministry opportunities.

Openness to the Community: Finally, we are able to share our space and time with the community. The St. Luke’s property and building are seen as a community resource, and that is reflected in the numerous groups that utilize space in the church building. Community groups like Scouts, the Performing Arts Academy, Wesley Players, Alcoholics Anonymous among others utilize the St. Luke’s property and building to host meetings, rehearsals, shows, and camps.

St. Luke’s hosts ample public opportunities and events that introduce people to the church for the first time. This includes traditional opportunities like our Little School, annual pumpkin patch, car show, Easter Fun Day, and Fall Festival, to name a few community wide events.

What we envision

St. Luke's can increase the ways in which we make our presence known to the community, expand our faith-leadership in the community, grow our membership, and expand the methods used to invite people to experience St. Luke's.

Expanding the ways in which we **make our presence known to the community** can take a number of diverse directions. Evolving our marketing efforts can include refreshing our web-site to be easier to navigate, and ensuring that all links are up-to-date. Marketing efforts can also use the wide array of social media platforms that are available to spread the mission of our church, and to help ensure that our Church is known for the acts that we perform in the community. Also, increasing the knowledge of what is offered through CSE is seen as an important part of our future.

Expanding our faith leadership in the Highlands Ranch / South Denver Metro area is another area of possible growth shared by our congregation. We long for St. Luke’s to be known throughout the area as a place with spiritually rewarding programs and community-impacting outreach programs. Ideas for how this could look include greater collaboration with other area churches, both with other Methodist churches as well as those of different denominations. This leadership and collaboration can take the form of community-wide worship services, joint social events (think “pie night”, participating in the 4th of July

parade together), and music/choir performances that are presented outside of our four walls (at senior citizen communities, correctional facilities, schools).

In expanding our faith leadership, there is opportunity to **equip and enable individuals** to participate in mission work. It was shared in the listening sessions that individuals may be hesitant to serve because they do not have experience serving and are not comfortable. The vision is to bridge this gap between wanting to serve and going into the community to be the hands of the church. We want to equip St. Luke's to go out and let the larger community know who we are, which is to be a 'headquarters for hope' for our larger community.

A strong and resounding vision heard at each of the listening sessions was to **grow the membership and attendance** in the church through both traditional methods as well as outreach in new and creative ways. Inviting people to come and experience all that St. Luke's has to offer is a critical component of growth. Invitation can focus on expanding the greeting of new worshipers on a Sunday morning. This can take the form of people handing out the purple bags and engaging the new visitors in welcoming conversation.

Inviting people who have yet to experience a Sunday worship is also important. There are various avenues for this outreach and invitation. There are a significant number of people (and many of these are millennials) who drop-off/pick-up their children at Little School, bring their children to experience the pumpkin patch, stand in line to pick up peaches, attend Cantata Sunday, and PAA events as their only St. Luke's visit of the year. These are times when we can extend clear and purposeful invitations to experience other facets of St. Luke's.

Growing the congregation, especially **younger people and families**, was a loudly-heard theme. Looking for new avenues to connect with, and invite, children and their families is something that should remain top-of-mind. Specifically, expanding on the opportunities to invite parents of Little School children to be active in the St. Luke's community included:

- Offering opportunities for the Little School parents to socialize with the other parents - as well as with the clergy and staff from St. Luke's. This could take the form of: coffee-and-cake (or date night out) evening where we can offer child-care downstairs while giving the parents the time to visit and bond upstairs; or a "back to school" picnic to welcome the parents and invite them to be part of the church in various ways.
- There is a recognition that a strong childrens and family ministry begets a strong youth program. There is a desire to invest in family ministries so that children are engaged throughout their adolescence, as youth and beyond.
- Encouraging a stronger connection between the church (and clergy) and the students.

- Providing classes to support the parents in learning about child-raising (e.g., Parenting with Love & Logic), conflict resolution, etc.

“Meeting people where they are” is something that is recognized as a vision for the congregation. Sharing God’s love and helping people grow in both faith and spirituality is something that doesn't have to be at the church building on a Sunday morning. All the demographic data about Highlands Ranch shows that the number of young people and those with children is currently shrinking (with longer range forecasts showing a reversal in that), so having opportunities to gather and/or worship in non-traditional venues and methods is seen as something that can appeal to younger people, as well as those with children. A key element is to meet people where they are in their spiritual journey, is to have St. Luke’s be a safe spiritual community for all people.

Stewardship of our resources

What we value

The thoughtful, deliberate, and controlled way in which we manage our resources is critical for the health and vibrancy of St. Luke's. Resources are not just financial in nature, they include the skills, interests, and energy of the people in the congregation.

St. Luke's can continue to be good stewards of our resources, people's time, their talents, and our financial resources, by:

Engaging the **volunteer power** of the congregation. Understanding people's interests and talents, and then inviting them to use their talents is very highly valued. We also value using this volunteer power to off-set spending money on things that volunteers can do. This donating of time, skills, and expertise enables us to do things such as: build choir loft spaces; offer classes on a wide array of topics; and even save money on Christmas Eve candles by having volunteers sort and clean candles to be reused rather than tossing them.

Using **our building** to support the community by hosting meetings and events. Examples that are valued include the Boy Scouts, AA/12-step programs, PAA, and using our physical facilities to house Little School.

Using our volunteer and financial resources to do **mission work**. This can be in support of the local community (Feeding the 5,000, HAAT Force, Stephen Ministry, Urban Peak, VBS), across the country (youth mission trips), or internationally (Guatemala).

Being **transparent** regarding our financial position. Continuing to understand the annual budget, and where the financial-giving is being used is highly valued. Also valued is the clarity regarding specialty giving campaigns. Examples include: collecting for UMCOR, the new organ fund, and the various church fundraising events. The resounding feedback was that people are more likely to give when they know where it is going. Additionally, seeing that lay leaders, staff, and clergy are all working in concert to best coordinate the use of our limited funds is very much appreciated.

What we envision

While there was significant confidence expressed in the stewardship of St. Luke's resources, there were a number of themes envisioned to enhance this stewardship.

Providing **additional transparency** and detail regarding our budget and financial situation throughout the year, and providing even more granular detail. Other transparency contemplated was to understand specific fundraising goals and objectives for the church fundraising or special campaign events. In addition to the annual budget and stewardship campaign, the longer-term financial needs of the church, and the conference (e.g., the apportionment), could be shared. It is also envisioned that the types of **financial oversight & controls be shared** as well.

Establishing a fiscally sound **plan for the maintenance of the building/facility**. Creating a "reserve study" and then a capital campaign is wanted to address both the short and longer term needs of our facility. One respondent summed this topic up by sharing that "We're one disaster away from a disaster" and having the funds available to meet unexpected events is critical.

It is envisioned that while we recognize that clergy and staff are called to their roles, these are also jobs that they are performing. They need to be **compensated with an appropriate salary/benefits package** that is commensurate with their contribution, as well as in-line with other United Methodist churches.

Being OK with saying no to activities & events that do not have the volunteer and financial support is acceptable. Even if we've been doing something historically and for a long time, it is alright to stop doing it if the resource commitment isn't available. We have the strength to make the difficult choices to restrict or eliminate line items in the budget if the funding just isn't there for it, which will help to ensure balanced budgets.

Providing more educational opportunities concerning **planned giving** through wills, trusts, donation of assets, etc. This shows participants that there are alternative ways to give to St. Luke's, it does not have to be providing a payment every month. Tithing and contributing to St. Luke's can be done in a way that is most appropriate for the members of the St. Luke's community. People shared that they liked the presentations done recently by Steve Stine regarding ways St. Luke's members could enhance their giving through tax-advantaged giving.

Looking for **alternative revenue sources** and for ways to enable the congregation to give in different ways. Ideas envisioned that can generate income included a bookstore, tea shop, or yoga studio. It was also shared that targeted-giving, such as for an event or something in the building, can be effective because people like to see what their giving is going.

How this information will be used & next steps

The themes and ideas presented in this report provide alignment for visioning and decision making by staff, clergy, the Finance Team, the Executive Team, and lay leaders. These congregational values and visions will help to inform the prioritization of church ministries, programs, and financial strategy. These details also provide the congregation with information they may need to consider, including what values and visions most strongly resonate with them, and where they can direct their time, talents, and resources.

Here are just a few examples of how this information is being used to help guide next steps for the future of St. Luke's:

- In 2023, the **Executive Team** commissioned the Futures Task Force and the resulting Appreciative Inquiry process. Executive leaders will consider the visions and values expressed by the congregation to plan, recommend, and implement broad, churchwide strategies. The report provides a grounding and unifying reference for leaders to collaborate with clergy, staff, and the congregation as we steward the mission, ensure financial health, and empower St. Luke's as a relevant and inclusive community of faith, today and in the future.
- The **Clergy Team** is using the wide array of themes presented in this final report to provide inspiration regarding future sermon series and to fine-tune how they design worship services. Along with key leaders, they are looking at the long-term and far-reaching impact St. Luke's can have on our neighbors and community in Highlands Ranch and Douglas County. The Clergy Team is also eager to support key leaders and staff in continuing the positive and energetic momentum St. Luke's has experienced since the launch of the Future's Task Force at our 40th Anniversary in March of 2023.
- The **Leadership Teams** (e.g. Lay Leadership, Trustees, Finance, etc.) will use this information to provide direction for the future of the church while honoring what the community of St. Luke's appreciates and recognizes as fundamental to the identity of the church. Lay teams are using this direction to influence and prioritize the appropriate activities, initiatives, and ministries within St. Luke's.
- The **Center for Spiritual Engagement (CSE)** is reviewing the visions and values to guide ongoing creation of meaningful experiences. The leadership team is enthusiastic to see how well the themes and values align with the CSE purpose of fostering health and wellbeing of mind, body, heart and spirit through experiences that inspire connection, hospitality, and transformation.
- **Staff** will use this information to inform the decisions they make within their various ministries to provide alignment with the voice of the congregation.

- This report provides the “WHAT” that is valued and envisioned, and this summer “**Vision in Action**” sessions are being planned to brainstorm specific ideas of the “HOW.” The congregation will be invited to these summer sessions focused on generating ideas for operationalizing and implementing some of the “what is envisioned” components that were heard. The results of these sessions will be shared with staff and with the Executive Team.

Appendices

Purpose, timing, and membership of the Futures Task Force

Purpose/Role of Task Force

The task force was a discovery group, not an implementation team. The role was to explore and provide recommendations that can be adopted, further developed, or implemented as a plan by one or multiple teams. The team was chartered by the Executive Team and included representation from clergy and the congregation at large. The team focused on the following to help guide future membership growth and engagement, and to help ensure the sustainability of St. Luke's into the future:

- **Define needs for outreach and alignment with the broader community by looking externally and (internally).** What do we need to do to draw people in?
- **Create a welcoming environment for visitors.** This is a priority for the Lay Leaders.
- **Ensure our financial future.** While this is a priority for Stewardship and Finance, this topic affects all elements of St. Luke's.
- **Related: Define who we are (statement of inclusion).**

The team recognized several dynamics that made conversations and decisions about the future essential for our community, including:

- Slowing population growth and changing demographics in Highlands Ranch and the south metro areas we serve.
- Evolving attitudes, definitions, and expectations of “church” in general.
- An evolving social climate regarding issues of justice and inclusion.
- Demographic changes within St. Luke's and the need to sustain and support our infrastructure.

Timing:

The team met regularly - both at the church as well as virtually - beginning in March 2023. The decision to roll-out a formal Appreciative Inquiry process was made in the summer of 2023, and the resulting findings were published - and began to be used - in the spring of 2024.

Team Members

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| ✓ Krisi Amick | ✓ Rev. Sallie Suby-Long |
| ✓ Marty Davidson | ✓ Tom Weddel |
| ✓ Rev. Michele Kaminsky | ✓ Gordon Heaton |
| ✓ Paul Kirk | |
| ✓ Sam Leahy | |
| ✓ Michelle Mallory (Chair '23) | |
| ✓ Steve Roper | |
| ✓ Chris Sheridan (Chair '24) | |
| ✓ Rev. Liza Stoltz Hanson | |

Questions used in listening sessions

Questions Matrix			Does the question address one or more of the 4 original key tasks of the Future's Task Force?			
Order	Question	What is the intention of the question?	Outreach & Community Involvement	Create a Welcoming Environment	Ensure our Financial Future	Define who we are
1	Describe a time you felt welcomed or a part of creating a welcoming/inclusive environment at St. Luke's.	Define what a welcoming environment is at St. Luke's today. Integrate the definition into how we mobilize laity, clergy, and staff with how they are engaging with the community.		x		x
2	Describe a time when you felt especially energized and enthusiastic at St. Luke's. What were the events / circumstances in this season?	Identify how community members are engaged when they are feeling enthusiastic at St. Luke's. How are people engaged with St. Luke's when St. Luke's is at its best in their perspective?		x		x
3a	How have you seen St. Luke's live into being an active member of our community? (this may replace/duplicate Q #3b)	Determine what connectivity with our greater community looks like when it is healthy.	x			x
3b	In a dream state how do you see St. Luke's engaging in our community? (this may replace/duplicate Q #3a)	Integrate what community engagement looks like into our action and engagement activities with the greater community.	x			x
4	How have you seen St. Luke's being a responsible and effective steward with our congregation's financial and other resources?	How do we prioritize and utilize all of our resources to meet our churches and community's needs?			x	x
5	Imagine that we're exactly where we want to be as a Church, in three years time. What are the three biggest things we've accomplished between now and then?	Receive a set of goals and objectives that the team can review and check for alignment of how our church is structured today and gaps that can be filled.				x
6	Before we wrap-up, do you have any additional thoughts you'd like to share about how we can all ensure the success of St. Luke's over the next few years?	Capture any remaining ideas participants have that didn't fit into a prior question	x	x	x	x

Inventory of the listening sessions

Group	Facilitator	Partner facilitator	When was session held	# of participants	Age distribution		
					Under ~21	~22 - 50	~ 50+
Bells	Kristi	Paul	10/29	8		4	4
Choir (break out 1)	Alan B	Stephanie	10/26	9			9
Choir (break out 2)	Michelle M	Eileen	10/26	9			9
Choir (break out 3)	Chris	na	10/26	6		2	4
Christian Connections	Chris	na	10/29	9		1	8
Open Session - Nov - #1	Chris	na	11/5	4		2	2
Open Session - Nov - #2	Alan	Paul	11/12	10		1	9
CSE Leadership	Paul	Sallie	11/14	7		2	5
Exec Team	Michele M	Paul	10/22	9		4	5
Friday Bible Study	Paul	Liza	10/20	8		3	5
Lay Leader	Chris	Paul	9/20	6		2	4
Men's group	Chris	na	10/2	6		1	5
Missions	Liza	Sam	11/14	2		2	
Open Minds	Chris	na	11/12	8			8
Staff	Paul	Chris	9/19	10		5	5
Teachers of Little School	Sam	Chris	11/14	24		20	4
Kristi's Supper Club	Kristi	na	11/18	10	2	4	4
Open Session - Nov - #3	Tom	Chris	11/19	8			8
Family ministry	Liza	Liza	11/28	5		5	
Finance & Trustees	Paul	Marty	2/4	3		1	2
Open Session - January - #1	Tom	Sam/Gordon	1/28	4			4
Open Session - February - #2	Gordon	Chris	2/11	6	1	1	4
				171	3	60	108