INTRODUCTION
We, the consultation team, thank Pastor Jean Ness, the lay leadership, and the congregation of Howe United Methodist Church for the invitation to consult with this body of Christ.

The following observations and ministry action plan (MAP) are the result of this team studying the following information: 1) Howe UMC’s self-study document provided by its leaders; 2) FCJ online survey; 3) interviews with the pastor; 4) interviews with ministry team leaders; 5) a meeting with the Church Council; 6) a MissionInsite demographic report of the area’s population; 7) Faith Perceptions Mystery Guest Report; 8) and input from Saturday’s workshop.

We pray that God will use this assessment experience and consultation report to help Howe UMC more effectively make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the community and the world.

STRENGTHS
Howe United Methodist Church’s greatest strengths are as follows:

1. FRIENDLY CONGREGATION
The Mystery Guests indicated friendliness as a strength of Howe UMC. One stated, “I felt very welcome in this church and thought the greetings from everyone were very sincere. I believe they are interested in enlarging their congregation.” Another stated: “I definitely felt like this close-knit group was looking forward to spending this time together and sharing it with me or any other guests.” Also, in the FCJ online survey and the self-study the congregation affirmed friendliness and a welcoming congregation as strengths of Howe UMC.

2. MISSION MINDED CONGREGATION
Howe UMC has a strong sense of calling to be in ministry to both those within the church and those beyond the four walls of the church. This is evidenced in their care and concern for each other and their efforts to connect with their community. They realize their faith has to be lived out in practical ways. Some examples of this care and concern are;
   • A Kids’ Club, which ministers to about 50 children per week, most of whom do not attend the Howe Church.
   • The obvious attention and emphasis on worship that helps the congregation connect with God, each other, and newcomers who are visiting.
   • The goal of tithing their budget to local, regional, and global missions.

3. PASTORAL LEADERSHIP
Howe UMC is blessed to have Jean Ness as their pastor. Pastor Jean is described as knowledgeable and passionate and one member stated: “One of the reasons that the church is growing is that Jean is an enthusiastic go-getter.” Mystery guests enjoyed being greeted by the pastor, and in regards to the sermon, one guest commented: “I really enjoyed her message. It was
so interesting and easy to follow that time flew by.” Many members affirmed her preaching and her ability to continue to lead the church forward.

**CONCERNS**

Howe UMC’s greatest areas of concern are as follows:

1. **UNCLEAR VISION**
   While Howe UMC understands its mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, it does not appear to have a guiding vision, which leaves the congregation without a clear, shared direction and focus. This lack of vision hinders realistic goal setting, long-range planning, evaluation of results, and wise stewardship of human and financial resources.

2. **UNCLEAR DISCIPLESHIP PATH AND UNFOCUSED OUTREACH**
   There is no clear system at Howe UMC for intentional faith development. There is no process to enable persons – new or long-time members – to discern where they are on their spiritual journey and what steps they could take to move forward. While Howe UMC currently has outreach ministries in the community, the consultation team heard many express an uncertainty as how to make lasting connections and expand the ministry to other family members of those being served. It was expressed, “We have the potential to reach the community, but we need the skills to do it.”

3. **LACK OF SERVANTS AND SERVANT LEADERS TO FULFILL THE MISSION**
   Measures have been taken to strengthen the current leadership, involving intentional training, review of leadership roles, and apprenticing of some new leaders. Despite these efforts, the consultation team repeatedly heard members and leaders express the desire for more leaders and more widespread involvement of people throughout the church. The consultation team affirms the church’s decision to move to a single board structure to move people from meetings to ministry.

**MINISTRY ACTION PLAN (MAP)**

The consultation team is confident that the leadership of Howe UMC is able to implement the following MAP.

1. **DEVELOP A CLEAR, SHARED VISION**
   Upon the acceptance of this report, the congregation will affirm their acceptance of the mission statement of The United Methodist Church, “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”

   The congregation will have a worship service of prayer and forgiveness in order to become more focused and unified in carrying out the mission, and begin to seek unity in the spirit of Jesus Christ. This will be organized by the pastor and the FCJ Prayer Coordinator and be conducted by January 17, 2016.
The coach will conduct a vision workshop for the congregation by January 31, 2016. The purpose of this workshop is to help the congregation discern the vision that will guide future decisions and ministries of the church. Following the vision workshop, the pastor, in consultation with the coach, will establish a leadership team of five to seven persons who will lead the process to discern the vision, which will be presented to the Church Council for discussion and adoption by March 13, 2016, and then be presented to the congregation.

Upon adopting this vision, all church ministries, committees, and teams will conduct a ministry review, as well as set goals, in order to align their efforts with the church’s mission and vision. The Church Council will collect the results of the ministry review and goal setting by June 1, 2016. It will then align the church’s resources to support these efforts and monitor progress. All future ministries must be aligned to the mission and vision and all ministries will be reviewed annually.

2. INTENTIONAL FAITH DEVELOPMENT AND STRATEGIC MISSION
The pastor and lay leader, in consultation with the coach, will establish a team to develop a plan of intentional faith development for all ages. The coach will lead an intentional faith development workshop by March 15, 2016. An intentional faith development plan will be developed to help move people from wherever they are on their spiritual journey to become fully committed followers of Jesus Christ. The intentional faith development plan will represent a lifelong process designed to include everyone, whether a non-believer or one who is maturing in faith. The team will discern a faith development plan within a Wesleyan model that encourages all persons:

• to connect and grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ
• to be transformed by studying the Bible and the principles of the Christian faith
• to discover their unique call to ministry
• to connect with other believers for support and accountability
• to be in service to others for the purpose of the mission

The intentional faith development plan will begin being implemented by September 1, 2016.

The pastor and Church Council Chairperson, in consultation with the coach, will establish a task team by March 31, 2016. This team will develop a mission strategy for the church to reach and connect with the community. This task team will do the following:

• contact Church Development to schedule evangelism and outreach training opportunities, and read through Get Their Name written by Bob Farr, Doug Anderson, and Kay Kotan
• take an inventory of current outreach ministries (e.g., VBS, Kids Club, Egg Hunt, Coconut Hut) and identify unchurched participants to develop a follow-up plan for connecting them to additional ministry and outreach opportunities
• encourage leaders to develop intentional relationships with friends and neighbors with the purpose of faith sharing
• encourage members to intentionally learn the names of those identified above, and develop next-step actions to foster deeper relationships with them, such as offering to pray with them, inviting them into their homes for a meal, and spending time with them
• develop bridge events to which these individuals can be invited into the life of the church
The outward focused strategy will begin being implemented by September 30, 2016.

3. INVITING AND DEVELOPING SERVANTS AND SERVANT LEADERS TO FULFILL THE MISSION
The pastor and Staff Parish Relations chairperson, in consultation with the coach, will establish a leadership development team by January 31, 2016. This team will be responsible for investing in the members, leadership and staff of the church by:

- intentionally involving and embracing the gifts of younger generations
- examining the existing Church Council structure and enhancing it to be more effective
- exploring spiritual gifts and other ministry placement inventories
- establishing a system to find and develop new leaders
- identifying opportunities for people to begin serving in ministry
- encouraging congregants to invite others to serve with them in a mission opportunity
- equipping leaders with training and job expectations
- establishing an approved goal-setting process that supports the mission and vision
- rotating leaders on administrative teams (e.g. 3-year maximum terms)

The work of the leadership team will begin being implemented by May 31, 2016.

CONCLUSION
We, the consultation team, thank you for the opportunity to serve your congregation through this Fruitful Congregation Journey assessment process. We pray and hope for your congregation that God will use this process to help your church become more effective and fruitful in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. May God give you courage and strength as you move forward.

Emily Reece, Tim Terrell, Jennifer Hudson

Town Hall Meeting Dates:
Thursday, November 12 at 6:30 pm
Sunday, November 15 at 10:15 am (during the Sunday School hour)
Tuesday, November 17 at 6:30 pm

Church Conference Date:
Sunday, November 22 following worship (about 10:00 am)