

Listening Session Report

During the first phase of our strategic visioning process, one of our consultants, Stacy Swain, facilitated 9 listening sessions – 7 for adult members and active participants, one for the staff, and one for the youth group. All total, 54 adults, 5 staff, and 13 youth participated. The vision team catalogued the number of responses for each theme that are listed below. The most frequently named themes are listed first with others in descending order; however, all represent important aspects of our community.

- Community/Belonging/Friendship/Family
- Racial and Social Justice/Community Outreach
- Diversity/Inclusion/Acceptance
- Spiritual Formation/Growing in faith/Being a Better Person
- Caring and supporting each other
- Empowering lay ministry
- Reconciliation and healing
- Theological diversity and respect for individual differences
- A place for children and youth
- Inspirational Preaching, worship, and music

Purpose Statement (Draft)

At each of the listening sessions, participants were asked to make an attempt at a one sentence purpose statement for our congregation. The Vision Team has compiled all of that information and is offering a draft purpose statement of:

FCC Milton is an open community for all to belong, grow, and engage the world in acts of service and justice.

We welcome feedback on this statement as to whether you feel it accurately captures who we are called to be going forward as well as any suggested wording changes. This statement will be tweaked and edited throughout the process until the congregation votes on final approval at the end of the process.

Feedback Sessions

The Vision Team will host two feedback sessions after worship on **May 8 and May 22** to provide more details about the information gathered, receive feedback from the congregation regarding the report, and explain and answer any questions about the next phase of our strategic planning process.

Banner Controversy

During the listening sessions, some members also expressed that they still feel anger and hurt over the banner controversy including feelings of being personally attacked, hurt that our church didn't stand more unanimously in support of racial justice, pressure to align with political groups rather than respecting individual differences of opinion, a sense that the process was poorly handled and not inclusive of the whole church, and a desire to keep "politics" out of church. It is clear that people on all sides of the issue have wounds and hurt and that a number of people (again on all sides of the issue) are trying to decide if this is still the right church for them. Eighteen people who participated in the listening sessions explicitly mentioned the banner controversy as a source of pain or of something from which the church needs to heal from and/or repair the harm that was done.

Going Forward

We will now turn to Phase 2 of the process where we turn our focus to the needs of the community around us. Through the UCC's online tool, MissionInsite, we are able to gather the most detailed demographic information available about Milton and our surrounding communities. This data combined with what we hear in interviews with community members and in focus groups will help us identify what the core needs of our community are and how we might be called to respond. Finally, during the spring and summer, our members will be invited to take prayer walks (both collectively and individually) through the community with the simple invitation to pay attention to what God might place on your heart as you walk.

We need your help for our community outreach to be successful. If you are interested in researching demographic data, please contact [Alex Hasha](#) or [Niki Rukstalis](#). If you are interested in participating in interviews of community members, please contact [Steve Paxhia](#) or [Mike Baker](#). If you are interested in working with the prayer team to plan prayer walks, please contact [Karina Lund](#).