

## **Strengthening Local Churches Through Partnership: A Look at Faith Community Church's Revitalization Journey**

The United Methodist Foundation of Michigan has long been committed to supporting local churches in their journey of growth, revitalization, and mission. One remarkable example of this partnership is Faith Community Church, a United Methodist congregation. Their Revitalization Team has worked hand in hand with Rev. Gary Step, Senior Director of Leadership Development, to breathe new life into their ministry. Through a shared vision, Faith Community Church has undergone a transformation process aimed at strengthening its ability to serve both the congregation and the broader community.

### *A Year of Reflection and Renewal*

Faith Community Church recognized the need for revitalization not because the church was "dying," but because of a critical desire to ensure that the church was prepared to meet the needs of its congregants and neighbors in an ever-changing world. Rev. Step helped guide this process through his extensive experience with revitalizing churches. His ability to identify what is working and what needs attention were pivotal in setting a course for Faith Community Church's renewal.

"We all agreed that the need for revitalization was – and is – of critical importance," shared Jim LeBaron, a leader at Faith Community Church. "Out of that process, we formalized our Mission Statement and articulated the values that we as a church strongly hold. Both of these elements are important to any new folks seeking a worship home."

Faith Community Church's revitalization focused on three primary areas: enhancing the church's interior, engaging with the surrounding community, and reimagining the church's worship structure. With leadership from Pastor Coleen Wilsdon, the congregation worked on revitalizing the Narthex and Sanctuary, as well as developing outreach efforts through the church's Mission Team. The work extended to the structure of worship, ensuring that services are spiritually enriching and accessible to everyone.

### *Building Strong Partnerships for Lasting Impact*

Rev. Dr. David S. Bell, President & Executive Director of the United Methodist Foundation of Michigan, emphasizes the importance of partnerships between local churches and the Foundation. These collaborations not only provide the expertise needed for revitalization but also ensure that churches are equipped for long-term success in their missions.

"Revitalizing local churches is at the heart of the United Methodist Foundation's work," said Rev. Dr. Bell. "The partnership between Faith Community Church and the Foundation is a powerful example of how congregations can work together with trusted advisors to make lasting, meaningful improvements. This process is not just about renovating spaces; it's about equipping churches to fulfill their calling."

### *A Vision for the Future*

The work at Faith Community Church is a clear reflection of what happens when a congregation, with the support of the Foundation, commits to a shared vision of revitalization. With a newly refreshed interior as well as a strong focus on outreach and worship, the church is poised to make an even greater impact in its community.

Once the final touches are completed, including improvements to lighting and audio/visual systems, Faith Community Church is excited to open its doors and share the revitalized space with the community during an Open House. "Once we've cleaned up all the stored items and made each room presentable, we'll be having a formal open house period – more than one day," shared Jim LeBaron. "We're looking forward to sharing our new building with our neighbors."

This ongoing transformation is just the beginning of what will be a continued journey of growth and service. The collaboration between the Foundation and Faith Community Church stands as a testament to the power of partnership, vision, and a shared commitment to meeting the needs of both the church and its surrounding community.

#### *A Shared Commitment to Community*

Rev. Step reflects, "Faith Community Church's journey of revitalization is a shining example of what happens when a congregation commits to thoughtful reflection, dedicated work, and an openness to change. The church is now well-positioned to continue its mission for years to come, and it's been a privilege to be part of that process."

Together, the Foundation and Faith Community Church are proving that with the right support, churches can thrive, evolve, and meet the ever-changing needs of their communities. This partnership is not just about renovating physical spaces – it's about renewing the heart and soul of the church, preparing it to share God's love with all who walk through its doors.

For those interested in learning more about the Foundation's work with local churches, or to explore partnership opportunities, visit our website or contact Rev. Gary Step directly.