

Kingswood UMC Worship Task Force
Recommendations to KUMC Church Council
August 5, 2018

Mark, Church Council Members, and fellow church members, I am here to present the recommendations of the Worship Task Force. This task force was formed as a result of the findings of a separate group that was charged with discussing Kingswood's average worship attendance over the past seventeen years and the report of a recent mystery worshiper.

On Thursday June 28, 2018, the above group presented their findings to the Church Council and after much discussion, the Council formed the Worship Task Force, and we were asked to report back at this meeting. We were charged with discussing how worship at Kingswood could be more inviting and relevant to community members younger than their mid-forties in age, while continuing to glorify God, engage our members and develop disciples for Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the task force was to seek input from other Kingswood members. The task force members, which were approved by the council, are as follows: Rev. Charles Broome, Kara Grant, Ellen Jones, Dennis Lewallen, Bill McCahan, Sarah Sansbury, and Christina Scherrer. Over the past five weeks we have had four meetings and several email conversations discussing this charge.

The foundational truths which have guided all our discussions and our recommendations are based on our desire to be obedient to the Great Commandment (to love God and love others) and the Great Commission (of making disciples of Jesus Christ). In addition, this process has been bathed in much prayer and personal reflection by the task force.

We began our work by soliciting input from all Kingswood members via announcements in the bulletin, worship, weekly church emails, and information screens in the Welcome Center and Community Life Center lobby.

At our first meeting, it was determined we would conduct a survey targeting church members who fall into the designated age range. Survey participants included youth, parents of children and youth, members of the Neighborhood Sunday School class, and church members who are known to be 45 years old and younger. Those who participated in the survey were also asked to submit any additional comments concerning worship to Kara Grant. In addition to the survey, former visitors to Kingswood who fit this demographic were interviewed, asking them specific questions concerning Kingswood as a whole and specifically our worship service. Some of these visitors attended for several months before they stopped, and others only visited a few times. Between those surveyed, these former visitor interviews, informal conversations in the Neighborhood Sunday School class, and members of the task force, we have received input from in excess of 65 households. The findings and each comment were then discussed at length. Task force members made available to the group various articles and research obtained from reliable sources, which were also discussed. Furthermore, our current breakdown of membership demographics highlights the significant need for more young families.

In our interviews with visitors and comments from members who are younger than 45, there was quite a bit of consistency in what we heard. Generally, they identified that they are looking for a church where community is valued that has a friendly, welcoming atmosphere and is really having an impact in the community beyond the walls of the church. In worship, they like a mix of music styles; some traditional elements; a good, relevant message; music that they hear on the radio so they can be reminded of the worship experience during the week; and music that is up tempo but doesn't feel like a rock concert. Some of the comments about current worship at Kingswood were that it lacks energy, seems to be geared toward older people, doesn't engage their children, and feels formal so they are not comfortable having their children stay in worship. Finally, we heard from a number of visitors that they didn't return because there are not enough children in the congregation.

It would be safe to say that each member of the task force began this process with a set of beliefs and notions about what might be the best outcome for the process, but through our findings, discussions, suggestions, articles and the entire process, each of us has changed our thinking to one degree or another. However, none of us has changed in our great desire for Kingswood to be a place where our two foundational truths flourish and are accomplished in clear and visible ways throughout the Dunwoody area.

I am grateful to all the members of the task force for their prayers and commitment to our work and to Jessica Spencer and Sara Wynn, who helped conduct the interviews of visitors and potential members.

Therefore, based on our extensive research, including input from church and community, we the Worship Task Force present for Council approval the following recommendations.

1. Prior to the implementation of these recommendations, the task force should hold two information/listening sessions to ensure all members understand the recommendations and have the opportunity to provide feedback. The task force understands the acceptance and success of these recommendations is dependent on creating a platform for open and honest dialogue between all interested members.
2. The 8:45 service should remain unchanged.
3. The church (membership and staff) should implement modifications in the 11:00 worship service:
 - Creating a culture that will foster a more energetic worship experience.
 - Having music that reflects the diversity of our congregation and community and the times in which we live, including song selection, tempo, and instrumentation, specifically:
 - Having some song selections with a faster tempo.
 - Adding musical instrumentation, such as guitar and percussion, which will enhance our ability to have a greater variety of music played and sung in more current ways.
 - Including some song selections that are played on Christian radio and streaming services.

- Ensuring visitors and members are comfortable in either casual or dressy attire.
 - Consistently having a refreshment and fellowship time following the 11 a.m. service.
 - Continuing to focus on congregational hospitality and encouraging members to practice the 5-10-Link concept discussed in 7/29 church-wide Sunday school.
4. The Staff Parish Relations Committee should form a subcommittee to secure the additional musicians described above, and the Church Council should approve an amount not to exceed \$400 per week for these persons.
 5. A Worship Review Committee should be established to evaluate worship to ensure it is relevant, meaningful, and authentic for worshipers. The committee should contain six lay persons representing a broad cross section of the congregation, the Worship Staff, and a representative from the Staff Parish Relations Committee. The six lay members would serve three-year terms, which would allow two members to rotate off each year. The committee should meet quarterly with the Worship Staff to discuss our overall worship experience. This committee and the chair would be nominated by the Nominations Committee and approved by the Church Council.

Additionally, while this task force was asked to explore worship at Kingswood, many of our findings pointed to other opportunities beyond worship for us to better engage younger community members. The research shows that millennials typically evaluate many factors in choosing where to worship. Therefore, it is our further recommendation that in addition to changes in the worship service, the church consider reevaluating and fortifying the following areas:

- Expanding outreach and evangelism
- Expanding local mission opportunities to incorporate volunteers from within the community and make us more relevant to seekers
- Keeping hospitality at the forefront of our minds and continuing to innovate in this area

It is our expectation that these changes will be reevaluated on an ongoing basis to examine whether they are having the desired impact in our community to make disciples of Christ.

Respectfully submitted,

Kara Grant