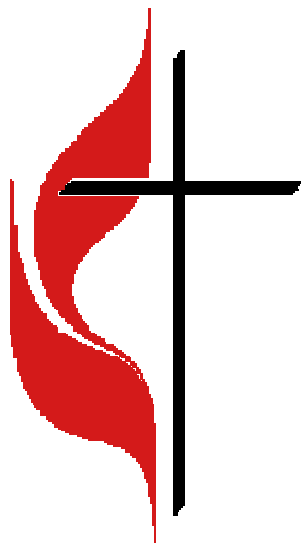


Nehemiah Team Report

2008-2018

(Strategic Planning and Visioning)



SERVANTS of CHRIST

United Methodist Parish

Houston, Texas

Fall 2008

Epworth Parker

Garden Villas

Misión Milby

Park Place

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INTRODUCTION

Over a period of 30 – 40 years the United Methodist churches of Southeast Houston have declined in membership, attendance, effectiveness, and fiscal viability. During that same period, the neighborhoods served by those churches have experienced dramatic demographic changes that have changed the character, culture and needs of the community. Because of its ineffectiveness and inability to connect with this new community, over time the Church has lost its right to share the gospel within the changed neighborhoods of the East End in which its physical presence remains.

In June of 2007 Bishop Janice Riggle Huie created the East End Parish out of four churches in Southeast Houston. The parish was created after much study and concern over the years of decline among the four churches. Bishop Huie's decision to place the churches in a parish and to appoint a Pastor in Charge and three associate pastors to the parish was welcomed by some and received with great angst and anger by others.

Initially a group of persons representing the four churches and the collaborative community ministries that operated out of those churches met together as a "Compass Group" to plan and set the initial course for the parish. During that time, the mission of the churches working together was established as well as the core values that would guide its ministry.

The Compass Group, after much study and conversation, focused on the words from I Corinthians 2:4 to describe the ministry of the parish in its Southeast Houston mission field. "Think of us as Servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries."

So, on September 23, 2007, the SERVANTS of CHRIST United Methodist Parish was formed at a joint Church Conference that unified the four churches (Epworth Parker, Garden Villas, Mision Milby and Park Place) with a parish plan that then elected a common set of officers, leaders and committees in order to establish one common budget, common policies, a common vision, and a common and unified program plan to serve the needs of the Parish. It was established in the covenant agreement signed on that day that there would be one Charge Conference to govern the Parish and all its assets held in common.

It was also recommended by the Compass Group that a Strategic Plan for Servants of Christ United Methodist and its relationships with collaborative ministry partners be developed by a new group elected by the Church Conference and that this group report back to the church no later than Fall 2008. It was recommended that this group be named **The Nehemiah Team** and that its primary role would be to develop a long-term (10-15 years) vision of hope for the Servants of Christ faith community and the City that surrounds it along with a proposed strategic action plan to achieve that vision. Per the recommendation of the Committee on Lay Leadership established for the parish the following persons were elected to serve as members of The Nehemiah Team:

Roger Dunlop, Chair	Chuck Fuller
Susan Lee, Program Ministry Chair	Jackie Fowler
Julius Trotter	Chris Corson
Eleanor Robinson	Ralph Randolph
Tom Boyles	Anne Wofford
Jocelyn Mayorga	Mike Jozwiak
Ada Berry	Justine Baly
Alicia Arauco	

Ex-officio

Reverend John Collier, Retired United Methodist Minister
James Fowler, Chair, Church Council
Pat Semands, Chair, Staff Parish Relations Committee
Ed Hale, Chair, Trustees
Carroll Latham, Chair, Finance Committee
Will Reed, Pastor

Associate Pastors and all spouses of pastors not elected to the Nehemiah team have also participated as observers and data gatherers in the process. These persons include Rev. Lois Boyles, Rev. Sherrill Corson, Rev. Luis Ramirez, Heather Ramirez and Karen Reed. In addition, Mr. Drew Clayton, our summer intern from Duke Divinity School participated in the process.

The further development and unity of the parish was facilitated on Wednesday, May 14 at a Church Conference chaired by our District Superintendent, the Reverend Jim Welch. At the Church Conference, each of the four churches represented voted unanimously to become one local church called the Servants of Christ United Methodist Parish. This decision unifies the parish legally into one body and simplifies reporting and record-keeping.

OUR MISSION

The SERVANTS of CHRIST mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

To achieve our mission we affirm our core values of:

Radical Hospitality

Passionate Worship

Faith Forming Relationships

Risk Taking Mission and Service

Extravagant Generosity

Fervent Prayer and the Diligent Study of Scripture

Connectional Ministries

In addition to these core values, which support our mission, the SERVANTS of CHRIST faith community has also developed supportive covenant relationships with several nonprofits. These include:

Center for Student Mission
Crossroads at Park Place, Inc.
Mission Milby Community Development Corporation
Shalom Health Ministry
Technology For All

STRATEGIC ISSUES FACING SERVANTS of CHRIST

On Wednesday, February 20, 2006 the Nehemiah Team engaged in an exercise to identify the strategic issues facing the SERVANTS of CHRIST United Methodist Parish. After much discussion and reflection, six issues were identified. The issues are named and defined below. In addition, members of the Nehemiah Team have worked together in small groups to identify what factors (mandates, mission, internal and external influences) make it a strategic issue and listed the consequences of failing to address the issue.

VISION/MISSION

STRATEGIC ISSUE ONE

How can we increase the number of visitors to our worship services and faith community? In other words, "how can we get people in the door and make disciples for Jesus Christ?"

Factors that define this as a strategic issue

We are called to "Make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." In order to make disciples, we must become invitational by addressing several items including:

1. The culture of the congregation(s). Historically the culture of our congregations has been
 - a. Exclusive
 - b. Isolated
 - c. Rooted in tradition
 - d. Existing in a specific time period (the heyday of the churches in their neighborhoods)
 - e. Resistant to transformation
 - f. Homogeneous
 - g. Disconnected from the immediate community
2. The cosmetic/functional appeal of our facilities does not attract visitors because the...
 - a. Buildings are in disrepair
 - b. Architecture is dated
 - c. Building layouts are not functional for the growth of a new congregation
 - d. Proprietary spaces are UNACCEPTABLE
 - e. Buildings have a lack of community friendly signage
 - f. Sanctuaries have insufficient parking and educational spaces for their size
3. The perceived needs of the surrounding community. To do that we need to identify the needs by:
 - a. Evaluating the community needs from the church's perspective

- b. Identifying church members who are living in and related to the community.
- c. Defining our community and the service area we intend to reach
- 4. Other Circumstances
 - a. The church has to reinvent its image for the community
 - b. The church must look like the community
 - c. The facilities must look in a way that is appealing to the community
 - d. The current membership must embrace change and transformation

Consequences of failing to address the issue

If we fail to attract new persons to worship services and to our community programs the church will decline until all its members are gone. If we do nothing, our church will die in the next 5-10 years.

STRATEGIC ISSUE TWO

How can we enhance our ministry, programs, and covenant relationships to be a positive change agent and catalyst to improve the quality of life in the neighborhoods around us?

Factors that Define this as a Strategic Issue:

1. Our church was named SERVANTS of CHRIST because we understand that a vital part of our role in the community is to re-present Christ to the world in which we live.
2. The neighborhoods around our churches have seen a decline in the quality of life over the past several decades.
3. There is more human need in our community today than fifty years ago when our churches were in their "heyday."
4. Jesus calls us to be change agents as "Servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries." I Corinthians 1
5. Our covenant relationships with non-profit ministry partners can be enhanced to provide vital places of ministry and service among our church members and their families.

Consequences of failing to address this Issue:

1. If we fail to address this issue our church will not be relevant to the communities around it.
2. If we fail to address issues the church will continue to decline until it closes.

STRATEGIC ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

STRATEGIC ISSUE THREE

How can we achieve effective and efficient finances that support the overall mission of the Servants of Christ Parish?

Factors that define this as a strategic issue

1. Texas Annual Conference mandate to combine the four churches in an effort to revitalize ministry and worship in Southeast Houston. This mandate requires that we develop a financial success formula.
2. Our Mission to "Make disciples for the Transformation of the World" requires us to focus on increasing the membership and participation in our church to better serve the needs of our community and grow spiritually together. In order to do accomplish this we must have financial resources.
3. Internal pressures for and against change impact how we develop this formula and what priorities we give to initiatives undertaken.
4. External community needs and pressures for change impact how we develop this formula and what priorities we give to initiatives undertaken.

Consequences of failing to address the issue

If we continue to operate and make the same mistakes that we made as individual churches this will lead to the decline and death of the parish as we:

1. Continue to pour the majority of the budget into a failing infrastructure
2. Continue to reduce program budgets to levels that cannot attract new members or provide adequate service to the community.
3. Continue to worship in "old styles" and in "antiquated facilities" that will not attract new members
4. Face the reality that ministers and other critical expenses cannot be paid
5. Close our doors.

STRATEGIC ISSUE FOUR

How can we make our facilities more attractive, appealing and inviting to prospective participants in the life of the church?

Factors that Define this as a Strategic Issue:

1. SERVANTS of CHRIST has four campuses with multiple buildings that in most cases are at least fifty years old. These facilities were not designed and built for 2008 in terms of both codes and attractiveness. They are dated and do not have many features that 2008 attendees expect in a church facility.
2. Our facilities have many deferred maintenance issues that have yet to be addressed and may be expensive.
3. Our facilities were built for larger congregations that often walked to worship in the neighborhoods.
4. Our mission is to "Make disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World". As we make disciples our membership will increase and we will be able to more effectively serve the needs of our community and grow spiritually together. In order to do accomplish this we must have buildings that invite persons in.
5. Growing churches have facilities that are attractive, appealing and invitational to prospective participants.

6. Over 40% of our annual expenses go toward buildings and property. This is almost double what most other churches spend.

Consequences of failing to address this Issue:

1. SC continues to spend more and more of its limited resources on buildings until it runs out of money. (example: Milby and Epworth Parker)
2. Our church facility will not attract new persons.
3. The church will continue to decline and eventually die as we close our doors and give the property back to the Trustees of the Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

STRATEGIC ISSUE FIVE

How do we staff for the future development and growth of the church?

Factors that Define this as a Strategic Issue:

1. SC churches have sought to reduce expenses over the years and in doing so have employed less and less staff.
2. The existing staff does not mirror the diversity of the region around the church

Consequences of failing to address this Issue:

1. If we do not staff for the future growth and development of the church, it will eventually die.
2. The ability of the church to attract the younger, more diverse population of our region will be impeded by a staff that does not mirror the diversity of the region.

STRATEGIC ISSUE SIX

How do we get buy in for our strategic plan from the current congregation and from the Texas Annual Conference?

Factors that Define this as a Strategic Issue:

1. Bishop Huie and the cabinet of the Texas Annual Conference have invested money, prestige, commitment and knowledge capital in the success of the SERVANTS of CHRIST parish. In order to further those investments, the continued prayerful and financial support of the parish is vital.
2. There continue to be some persons in the parish that are skeptical of the progress we are making.
3. Continued progress and success will depend in part on the continuing support of both the congregation and the Texas Annual Conference leadership.

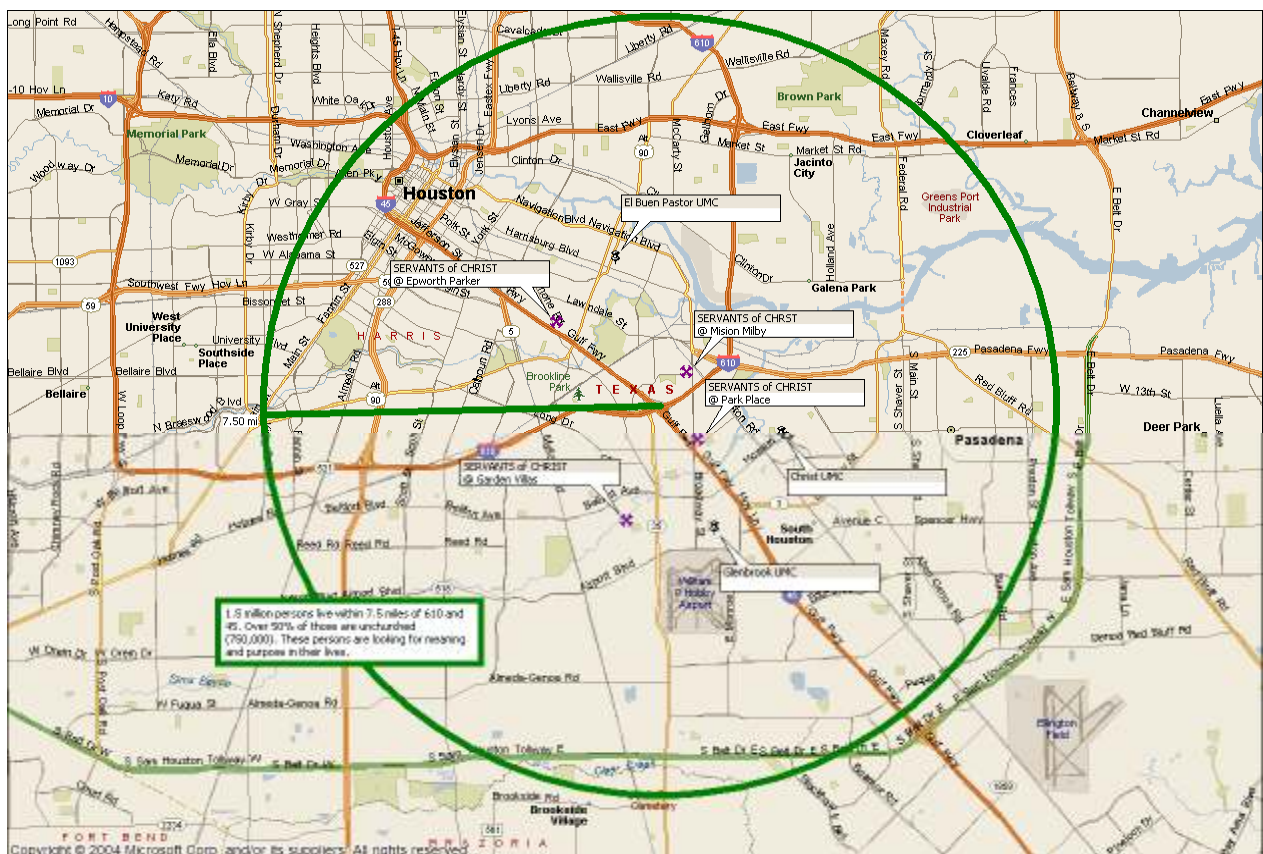
Consequences of failing to address this Issue:

Majority support of the congregation is vital to the success of the strategic plan. Continued support from the conference is also vital. If we do not have that support the goals of the strategic plan will probably fail.

SCANNING OUR FUTURE

As we scan our future, we must first define our mission field. For the purpose of this strategic plan for the SERVANTS of CHRIST parish, we have defined our mission field as a seven and a half mile circle around the intersection of Loop 610 and I45 South. This circle defines roughly the area that is within a 15 minute drive of the buildings of the four parish churches. This area contains an estimated 1.5 million persons and 750,000 persons who are un-churched. They do not have a church home.

OUR MISSION FIELD



Reviewing our past

In order to understand our future, we must first review our past. Our history as a church began in 1883 with the organization and building of the Union Methodist Episcopal Church. As the predecessor church to the Milby Memorial United Methodist Church and the growing Misi3n Milby congregation, the Union Church was a "northern" church in a southern city. The church was located on Medina Street just west of Broadway and the Ship Channel Turning Basin. Today, the Asbury

United Methodist Church, which is predominately African American, is located near the Medina Street property in the midst of a small community that once included a significant percentage of African Americans. Today, the distressed low-income community around the church today is predominately Latino.

The Park Place Church was organized in 1917 and twelve years later in 1929, in the midst of the Great Depression, Epworth was started. It merged with the Parker Church in the 1980's. In 1940, eleven years after the establishment of the Epworth Church as new church started in the Garden Villas subdivision. Each of these churches were started during a period in which the Methodist Church was actively starting new churches in Houston. During that time, neighborhood churches were established approximately 1.5 miles in a pattern moving southeast from Downtown Houston. That pattern was designed for an earlier age.

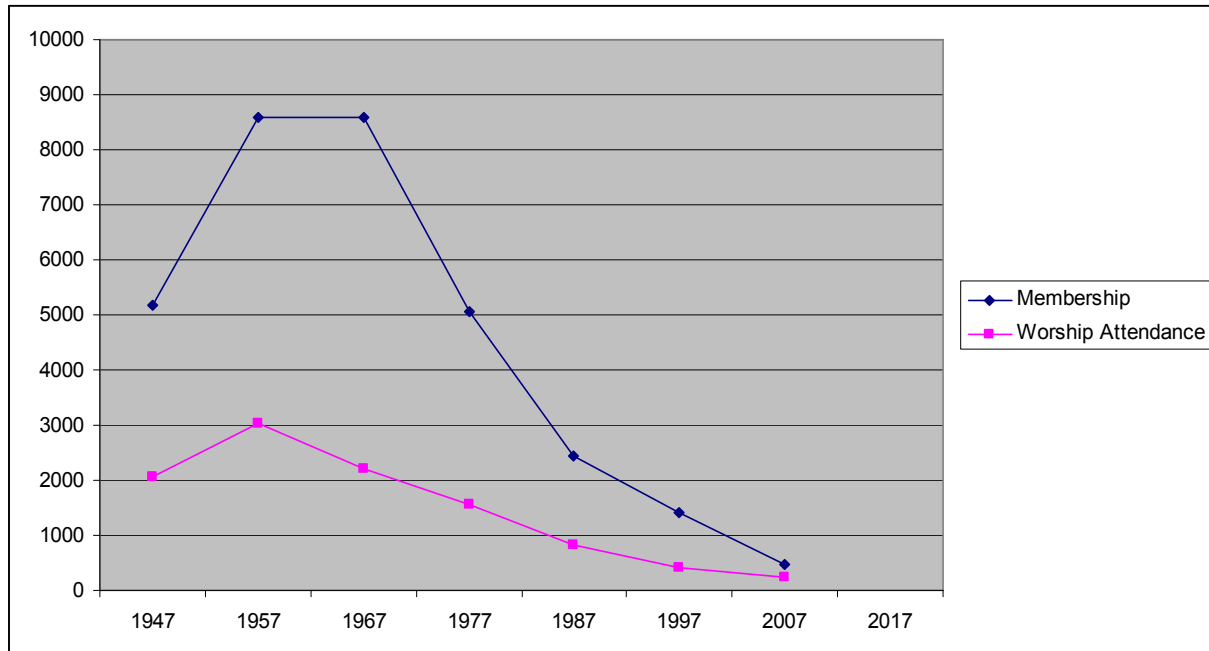
Listed below are selected United Methodist Churches in Southeast Houston. At their peak fifty years ago in 1957, these churches, including the churches of the parish and their predecessors had almost 10,000 members and over 3,400 in worship each week.

Membership

Selected United Methodist Churches in Southeast Houston	1947	1957	1967	1977	1987	1997	2007
Asbury	Records not available prior to 1968 merger			130	119	146	109
Central Park	196	545	402	218	139	70	Closed, merged with Epworth
Christ		324	703	474	408	194	77
El Buen Pastor	Rio Grande Conference church now meeting at Central Park						57
Epworth (Parker)	771	1272	1391	1124	394	202	84
Garden Villas	488	1000	1252	767	300	143	98
Glenbrook		286	846	983	843	322	155
Milby	649	473	338	263	210	38	Reopened as Misión Milby, 8
Parker	1374	1200	627	440	Closed, Merged with Epworth		
Park Place	1241	2405	2992	1371	983	707	243
St. Andrews	452	948	767	441	297	248	Closed, Merged with Park Place
Temple		750	812	435	109	Closed, Merged with Park Place	
SERVANTS of CHRIST							27
TOTAL	5171	9203	10130	6686	3802	2070	795

Worship Attendance

Selected United Methodist Churches in Southeast Houston	1947	1957	1967	1977	1987	1997	2007
Asbury	Records not available prior to 1968 merger					85	40
Central Park	119	259	170	74	44	65	Closed, merged with Epworth
Christ		245	183	128	102	73	32
El Buen Pastor	Rio Grande Conference church now meeting at Central Park						46
Epworth (Parker)	400	519	325	225	157	84	
Garden Villas	179		357	154	142	76	
Glenbrook		158	347	198	181	117	83
Milby	203	172	128	54	75	12	Reopened as Misión Milby
Parker	340	429	181	108	Closed, Merged with Epworth		
Park Place	576	860	656	356	282	153	
St. Andrews	250	432	161	441	91	30	Closed, Merged with Park Place
Temple		354	220	141	41	Closed, Merged with Park Place	
SERVANTS of CHRIST							238
TOTAL	2067	3428	2728	1975	1115	695	439



Churches and their Predecessors of the SERVANTS of CHRIST Parish

Community Needs

Current Community Needs

The greatest needs of the community are an outgrowth of the high poverty and low educational attainment that pervades the immediate service area north of the parish. Just south of the Park Place campus is the Glenbrook subdivision, a diverse middle income community that was a popular place for new families moving to the suburbs in the late 50's and 60's. The larger parish that extends to and beyond the 7.5 mile circle around the intersection of 610 and I45 south has higher levels of income and educational attainment. Other community needs exist because of multiple languages and cultures that do not fully understand each other's culture or language.

The Community

The most geographically defined area in the Servants of Christ service area is what is referred to as Houston's Greater East End. It is bounded by I45 on the southwest, US 59 and Buffalo Bayou/Houston Ship Channel on the north and east, and Loop 610 on southeast. These boundaries also comprise the boundaries of the East End Management District and the following five super neighborhoods designated by the City of Houston: Second Ward, Eastwood/Lawndale, Lawndale/Wayside, Pecan Park/Harrisburg, and Magnolia Park.

Only 30.7% of the land in the Greater East End is residential in nature. While the residents of the community are poor and predominately Mexican American, it is a community undergoing strong growth economically with limited positive economic impact on the majority of its residents. Aggregate household income in the community is estimated at over \$800 million. Over 2800 businesses in the community employ 50,500 employees and generate annual revenue of over \$12.2 billion.¹ Anecdotally it is understood that few residents of the East End enjoy employment in the higher paying jobs created by these 2800 businesses.²

The City of Houston Planning and Development Department describes the East End neighborhoods as follows:

Second Ward was one of the first Hispanic neighborhoods in Houston. It is the home of a number of important Hispanic institutions, including Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church, Ripley House, and Talente Bilingue. The northern portion of the neighborhood is industrial and many of the sites are contaminated with toxic materials. Most of the housing in the area was built before World War II. The largest block of post-war housing is the Clayton Homes public housing project

¹ Social Compact, Neighborhood Market Drill Down, 2001, Prepared for the City of Houston, Washington Mutual, Bank of America, Chase Bank, Enron, State Farm and Wulfe and Co., Section 6, page 2

² As reported in conversation with Mary Margaret Hansen, Executive Director of the East End Management District, July 2003.

on the community's western edge. In recent years the neighborhood's proximity to downtown has made it possible for several restaurants on Navigation to develop a citywide following.

Magnolia Park borders the Houston Ship Channel just south of the turning basin, the location of some of the first wharves built after Houston became a deep water port in 1913. The community thrived for workers on the docks and in the industries lining the channel. For a time it was even an incorporated municipality. As early as the 1930's Magnolia Park was developing an identity as a center of Houston's Hispanic community. This continues, especially around recently revived commercial areas near Harrisburg and Wayside. Some new residential development, previously hindered because of utility restrictions, is now underway. Central Park United Methodist Church is located in Magnolia Park on the edge of the Second Ward.

Park Place Park Place was an independent municipality before 1927 when it voluntarily consolidated with the City of Houston. At that time, Broadway and Park Place Boulevards were lined with large homes. Most of these were replaced with apartments and small businesses after deed restrictions in the area lapsed. (Some areas in the wooded setting adjacent to Sims Bayou are still deed restricted.) Many side streets in the community are lined with large pecan trees, some of which date from the 1920s. Industrial development occupies the northeastern corner of the community, which is close to the Houston Ship Channel. In recent years, several aging apartment complexes have been converted into condominiums. Several of these along Park Place Boulevard are occupied by large Vietnamese populations.

Based upon the demographics of students at the Park Place Elementary School, which serves the neighborhood, the Asian population of school age residents has increased to 21%, while the number of Anglo students continues to decline with only 1% of the student population. Over 75% of the population is Hispanic and only 11.2% of the total population remains Anglo while the Asian population is growing with 10.7% of all residents. Thus the Anglo population in the neighborhood is aging and declining in number. Per capita income in the neighborhood is \$10,969 which is about half of the per capita income of the City of Houston as a whole. Because of its many large lots, the neighborhood is not as densely populated as other East End neighborhoods. According to the 2000 Census Park Place has a population of 4,565 persons per square mile while Pecan Park (the neighborhood surrounding Milby) has 12,376 persons per square mile.³ Yet, over 57% of the housing units in the neighborhood are occupied by renters. Park Place United Methodist Church has the largest church building in the neighborhood in a place of prominence at the intersection of Broadway and Park Place and the Gulf Freeway (I45 South). Two other older churches are across the street from Park Place UMC, a Catholic Church and a Lutheran Church.

Pecan Park is a pre-World War II single family residential community located just south of Harrisburg. Its close proximity to the Port of Houston made it

³ Source: City of Houston Planning and Development Department

a popular location for workers in channel industries. Commercial development has eroded the edges of the neighborhood along the freeways. In the southern part of the area a large apartment complex originally built for adults is now the home for hundreds of families with school age children, which prompted the construction of two new HISD elementary schools. Over 5000 persons (25% of Pecan Park's population), a majority of whom live below the poverty level, live in the apartment complex. Milby United Methodist Church is located in the center of Pecan Park. St. Andrew's United Methodist Church is located on its edge near the intersection of I45 South and Woodridge. **Harrisburg** has a history that predates Houston. Harrisburg was a community located at the confluence of Brays Bayou and Buffalo Bayou before the Texas Revolution. It was burned by Santa Ana's army on their way to defeat at San Jacinto. Houston, established upstream of the devastated community later that year, quickly eclipsed Harrisburg. By 1927 the area was a part of Houston, dependent on the adjacent Port of Houston. Harrisburg's residential areas have largely disappeared – the area has less than 2000 residents – and its commercial district has not experienced the same revival as other East End shopping areas. In recent months several new homes (100-120K) have been built and occupied by families who have moved into the community. Asbury United Methodist Church is located in Harrisburg on the site of the original Milby Memorial Methodist Church.

Eastwood/Lawndale is a collection of middle class, single family subdivisions developed before World War II. The construction of the Gulf Freeway in the 1950's created a commercial edge on its south. The area was once exclusively Anglo, but through the growth of Houston's Hispanic middle class in recent decades, its population is now largely Hispanic. Renovation of its stock of well built bungalows and duplexes was cut short by the real estate collapse of the 1980's. However, a recent revival of interest in renovation in the area is now occurring again in tandem with the commercial development on the east side of Houston's downtown. Epworth Parker United Methodist Church is located on the edge of Eastwood/Lawndale at the intersection of Telephone Road and I45 south.

The neighborhoods of **Lawndale/Wayside** still reflect the area's origins as a prestigious east side neighborhood. At that time the municipal Wortham golf center was the city's first country club. The adjacent heavily wooded Country Club and Idylwood neighborhoods have remained attractive. Forest Hill and Mason Park are shady middle class havens with curving streets and large lots. The presence of wooded preserves such as the large Forest Park cemetery, Villa de Matel convent, Mason Park and Wortham Golf Center has helped to maintain the area's beauty.

In total the documented total population of the Greater East End has remained fairly stable at around 85,000. The undocumented population is estimated to be 10-15% of the documented population resulting in a total East population of around 100,000. The trend over the past thirty years indicates an East End population that is becoming younger with a greater percentage of Hispanics (89.10% Hispanic). These trends are also reflected by comparison with aggregate population percentages with the City of Houston (37.41% Hispanic). The percentage of the East End population under 19 years is 36.37% compared to

30.40% for the City of Houston. Magnolia Park has the largest percentage of Hispanics, while Pecan Park/Harrisburg has the youngest population. This is attributed to the concentration of young families living in the large apartment community northeast of Loop 610 and I45.

Table 1 – Greater East End Population Characteristics

	Second Ward	Magnolia Park	Park Place	Pecan Park/Harrisburg	Eastwood/Lawndale	Lawndale/Wayside	Greater East End	Houston
Population	15,023	22,512	9,902	21,121	12,784	12,922	94,264	1,953,631
Male	53.54%	51.95%	51.96%	52.82%	52.09%	51.58%	52.41%	49.94%
Female	46.46%	48.05%	48.04%	47.18%	47.91%	48.42%	47.59%	50.06%
Under 10 years	18.71%	19.94%		20.55%	17.41%	19.20%	19.11%	16.15%
10 to 14 years	7.77%	8.70%		8.94%	7.48%	7.89%	8.29%	7.15%
15 to 19 years	8.74%	9.17%		9.20%	8.66%	8.85%	8.97%	7.10%
20 to 24 years	8.91%	8.89%		10.60%	10.26%	10.22%	9.73%	8.28%
25 to 34 years	16.09%	16.43%		17.83%	17.83%	17.48%	17.09%	18.14%
35 to 64 years	32.18%	29.86%		27.90%	31.77%	29.60%	30.03%	34.78%
Over 64 years	7.60%	8.00%	5.46%	4.98%	6.59%	6.76%	6.77%	8.40%
Hispanic	85.41%	96.17%	75.47%	89.41%	84.39%	85.25%	89.10%	37.41%
Anglo	4.90%	2.86%	11.21%	5.38%	10.30%	12.35%	6.44%	30.81%
African American	8.31%	0.97%	2.31%	4.02%	2.53%	1.74%	3.35%	25.31%
Other	1.38%	0.00%	11.01%	1.19%	2.78%	0.66%	1.11%	6.47%

Source: U S Census Bureau, 2000

Note: Ethnicity statistics were compiled from various census statistics for simplicity. The Hispanic percentage includes of any Hispanic or Latino race. The Anglo percentage is an “Anglo only” statistic and “African American” was pulled from the single race category. In the Park Place neighborhood, 10.74% of the ‘Other’ population is Asian. Not all statistics for the Park Place neighborhood are readily available.

A survey of more than 250 Greater East End residents conducted for the Gang Free Schools project in the spring of 2002 identified gang activity among the community’s highest public safety concerns. (See Table 10)

Table 10 Resident’s Concerns	
Concern	Percent of Respondents
Gang Activity	45.1%
Burglary and Robbery	40.8%
Drug Dealing	34.1%
Low Police Activity	32.9%
Unemployment	27.5%
Loud Music	25.5%
Unkempt Property	24.7%
Insufficient Street Lighting	20.4%
Vandalism	13.3%
Graffiti	12.2%
Homicide	10.2%
Domestic Violence	9.8%
Truancy	3.1%

What social or demographic factors including changes or trends, may add to community problems?

Numerous factors contribute to community problems in Houston’s Greater East End. Poverty and unemployment is exacerbated by low educational attainment rates and limited job growth. These characteristics are typical of other parts of Houston’s inner city and of many urban, inner city communities.

Social disorganization also contributes to the gang problem and to other community safety issues. The Greater East End is home to many new immigrants. Two of every five

residents were foreign born, and one in five entered the country within the last ten years. One third of the area’s residents are not citizens. Limited English proficiency contributes to some social isolation of the community from other parts of the city.

Finally, fragmented social service delivery systems and limited resources limit the reach of crime prevention and community improvement efforts. Among community problems identified by the St. Luke’s Episcopal Health Charities Assessment (Phase 1) of the Greater East End were:

- Cultural differences and immigration issues
- Lack of understanding of available resources
- Lack of after-school programs
- Lack of bi-lingual instructors and providers
- Limited services for the elderly
- Transportation
- Increased gang activity and crime due to a lack of recreational activities
- Lack of quality affordable housing and livable wage jobs

Low educational attainment is pervasive in the East End. The Magnolia Park, Second Ward and Pecan Park/Harrisburg areas of the East End have the lowest educational attainment levels in all of Houston. This low educational attainment is likely connected to unemployment and underemployment in the East End. The area’s unemployment rate is significantly higher than that for the greater city of Houston, and the majority of working East End residents are significantly more likely to work in fields requiring lower levels of education, such as manufacturing or construction, and less likely to work in technology, administrative, scientific, financial, health or other professional fields,

The area’s low educational attainment rate is evident from 2000 Census statistics, which demonstrate that **64.2% of the area’s population over the age of 25 did not receive a high school diploma or GED.** There is some evidence that these low educational attainment rates are not improving. Data on the number of youth graduating from Austin and Milby High Schools suggests that far less than half of all students graduate. (See Table 11)

Table 11 Graduating Class Size as a Percentage of Freshman Class Size (Four Years Earlier)⁴			
	Austin	Chavez	Milby
Class of 2001	28.4%	42.3%	38.6%
Class of 2002	31.2%	39.4%	39.7%
Class of 2003	35.5%	41.7%	42.0%
Class of 2004	37.8%	43.1%	36.5%

Low educational attainment is also evident from the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills test (TAKS) which will be utilized for the first time during the 2003-

2004 school year with 11th graders to determine whether they are eligible for graduation. During the spring of 2003, the test was given on a trial basis to

⁴ Source: Calculated from statistics from the Texas Education System Academic Excellence Indicator System. Statistics for 2001 and 2002 are likely higher than stated; the opening of the Chavez High School in 2000 resulted in a reduction in student body for nearby campuses.

students across the state of Texas. Only 43% of eleventh graders at Milby High school passed the math and science portion of the test. Less than 41% of eleventh graders at Milby passed the reading test.⁵ Thus, if the same test results were used during 2002-2003 to determine whether students were eligible for graduation, sixty percent (60%) of the students would not be eligible.

School problems seem to be linked to gang involvement, which is pervasive in the community, 42% of community leaders, 41% of gang members and 24% of residents cited gang problems at school as a possible cause for gangs and crime in the community. In the gang-free schools research, school problems were ranked as the third most likely cause for gangs in the community by focus group parents. Teachers and school staff also identified academic failure as a factor influencing gang involvement. Some teachers attributed the students' failure to a "lack of commitment to education" on the part of youth and their families.

Demographics and population we will expect to serve

The current demographics and population of the church is approximately 85% Anglo and the rest, Latino, African American and Asian. The average age of the current congregation is estimated to be as high as 75 years of age. When the participation of those at Misión Milby is eliminated from the statistics, the average age could be as high as 80-85. Thus, the congregation is significantly older and Anglo than the demographics of the population/service areas of the parish. Selected Census 2000 demographics of the zip codes surrounding the existing facilities are as follows:

Census 2000 Data	77012 (Misión Milby)	77017 (Park Place, Christ)	77023 (Epworth Parker)	77061 (Garden Villas, Glenbrk)	77087 (west of I45@Park Place)	Total or Average
Population	25,174	32,823	33,050	25,500	36,194	152,741
Median Age	25.4	27.8	27.2	28.6	28.1	27.42
White	51.1%	48.4%	53.9%	34.4%	42.8%	46.12%
Black	3.5%	2.9%	1.8%	29%	16.2%	10.68%
Asian (Note1)	1.2%	4.0%	1.4%	6.7%	0.8%	2.82%
Latino (of any race) (Note 2)	91.7%	78.3%	86%	47.9%	72.4%	75.26%
Other	1.1%	0.6%	0.6%	0.4%	0.7%	0.675%
Occupied Housing Units	6,717	9,654	9,663	8,923	10,328	45,285
Renter Occupied Housing Units	61.8%	45.1%	56.5%	61.1%	40.2%	52.94%
Education, High School or Higher	31.8%	49.0%	42.5%	64.7%	47.0%	47.0%
Median Household Income	\$23,910	\$31,762	\$29,698	\$30,440	\$30,346	\$29,231
Individuals below poverty level	31.9%	19%	27.1%	18.3%	24.8%	24.22%
# Individuals below poverty level	8,060	6,194	8,645	4,590	8,849	37,338

⁵ Source, Houston Independent School District, July 2003.

Note 1 – This number has increased significantly since the last census. For example, over 24% of the students at Park Place Elementary are Asian. See table below.

Note 2 – Some persons who may be of one or more races, may also have a Latino cultural background.

Elementary schools near are a good indicator of neighborhoods. Below are listed the 2007-2008 selected demographics of schools nearest each of the church campuses in the SERVANTS of CHRIST parish.

Elementary School	Church/ Neighborhood	Limited English Proficiency	Low Income	Anglo	Black	Asian	Hispanic
Lantrip	Epworth Parker	49.3%	91.3%	1.3%	2.7%	0.4%	95.6%
Garden Villas	Garden Villas	30%	89%	2.5%	37%	0.2%	60.2%
Lewis	Glenbrook	56.0%	94.0%	1%	22%	<1%	78%
Southmayd	Mision Milby	53.3%	92.3%	1.1%	0.5%	0.3%	98.1%
Park Place	Park Place	58.7%	90.5%	0.8%	2.4%	23.5%	73.2%

Social Compact recently completed a study⁶ of the area and surrounding neighborhoods within an approximate 5 mile radius of the intersection of I45 and 610 which shows a population of 652,705. The estimated population within a 7.5 mile radius is 1.5 million. Based upon national data, it is estimated that approximately 50% or 750,000 of these persons are un-churched.⁷ According to the Social Compact study median household income in the five zip codes has increased from 20-35%. Median household income of new homeowners in the same Zip Codes is 22.9-119.7% higher than existing residents. Home values since the 2000 Census have risen from 100-140%. Households identified with undocumented banking relationships, and thus participating in a cash economy, range from 18-39%.

While it appears that there is a developing trend of gentrification and rising home ownership there continues to be a high percentage of individuals living below the poverty level at almost 25%. This is about equal to the City of Houston as a whole which identifies 26.41% of the population living below the poverty level. The Nehemiah Team recommends that the selected demographic data for the five zip-codes be re-evaluated following Census 2010 to identify trends that may have an impact on the parish.

What issues will our service area face?

Several issues currently face our service area. These include the following: changing demographics of the neighborhoods

⁶ The Social Compact study has not yet been released to the public. But, Dr. Reed participated in verifying some of the research data and has an advance copy of the draft of the study which was provided to him in November 2007

⁷ The definition of "un-churched" for the purpose of this document is persons who have not attended a church at anytime in the past six months.

- Gentrification and decline of some neighborhoods
- Divergent income levels from rich to the very poor
- Changing traffic patterns because of Metro and fuel prices
- Increasingly diverse neighborhoods of different cultures and languages
- Increasing safety issues and concerns because of crime and gang activity

Based upon projected data from a variety of sources the following issues and more are projected to face our service area in 2018:

- Gentrification and increased housing upgrades, teardowns and new housing in neighborhoods like Lawndale/Eastwood, Glenbrook and Garden Villas
- Divergent income levels from the rich to the very poor
- Transportation patterns different than today because of Metro Rail (Southeast and East End Corridors) and Commuter rail along Highway 3
- Continuing diversification of cultures, languages and neighborhoods

In order to effectively address these issues through the church and our covenant partners, the SERVANTS of CHRIST faith community must seek to provide services and offerings that will appeal to the broad regional diversity of our service area.

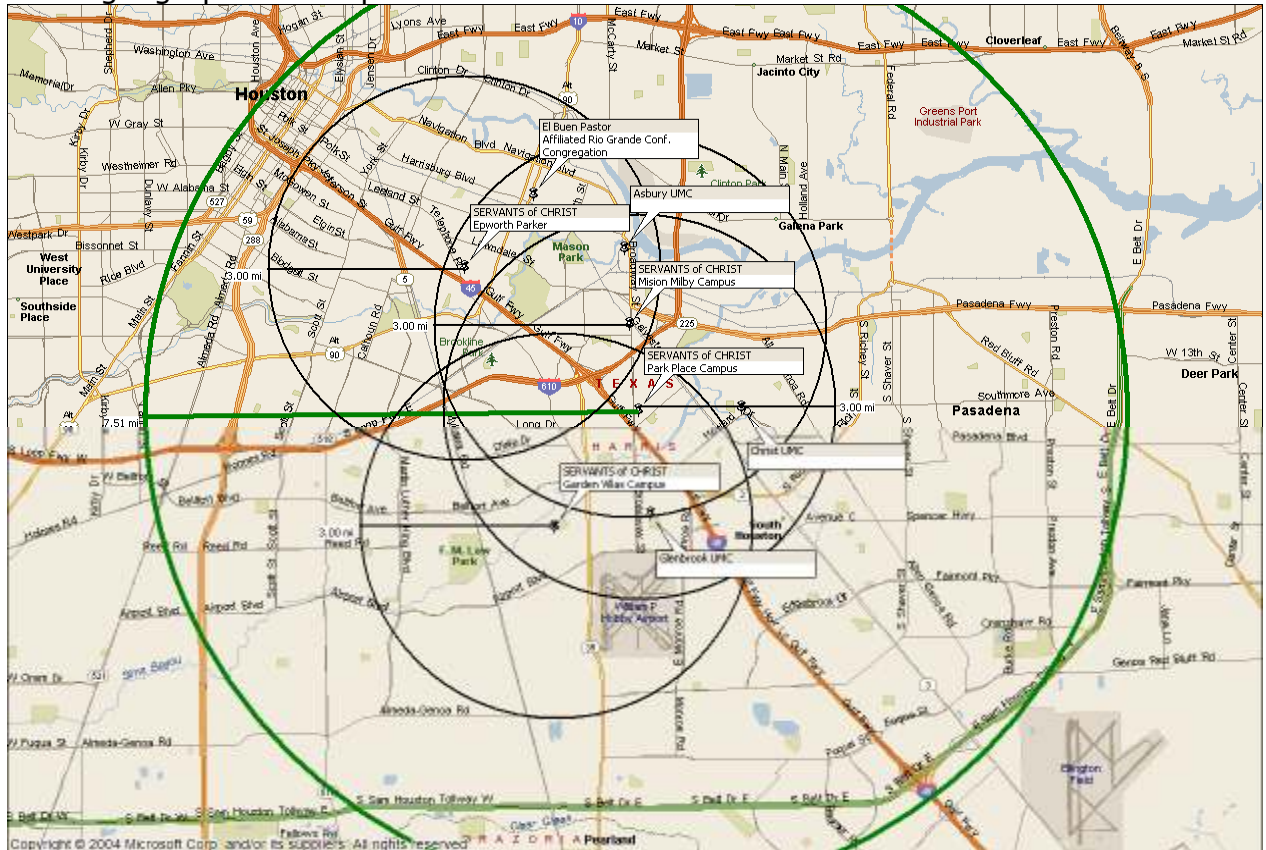
Our competitors

Many of the United Methodist Churches within the 7.5 circle around 610 and I45 have been declining for a number of years. The ones that are not are typically regional churches with high quality programs and ministries that have a unique character and service offering for and with their communities of interest. The largest United Methodist churches within the 7.5 mile service area are downtown or near downtown and include St. John's United Methodist Church, St. Paul's United Methodist Church, and First United Methodist Church. In addition, First United Methodist Church of Pasadena is within the 7.5 mile circle.

Other competitors include:

- Elim Church in Pasadena
- Grace Community Church
- Plus several other large non-denominational churches
- Several large Roman Catholic churches
- Plus many smaller evangelical & predominately Latino churches.
- Plus many smaller Mainline churches

SERVANTS of CHRIST – 3 mile circles around our various campuses to identify our direct geographical competitors



STRENGTHS & ASSETS

SERVANTS of CHRIST is fortunate to have many strengths and assets, both internal and external. Listed below are the strengths and assets identified by members of the Nehemiah Team. Those that can also be identified as challenges are underlined

INTERNAL STRENGTHS

Staff and Pastors
Loyal Members
Real Potential
Willingness to Change (unwillingness to change)
Property
Ethnic and cultural diversity
Music
Caring Membership
Collaborative and Connectional Ministries

EXTERNAL STRENGTHS

The greatest external strength of the SERVANTS of CHRIST United Methodist Parish is the location and visibility of its main campus at the corner of I45 South and Broadway/Park Place. This is one of the most visible church locations in the city. We believe this visibility requires that we take advantage of this strategic location and invest wisely in its improvement so as to increase its visibility and use it as a way to grow the church. A challenge in this location and all other locations is ADA accessibility. Any upgrades or improvements will need to be more accessible to all persons.

In addition to location and visibility, other external strengths include:

Misión Milby CDC and our other covenant ministry partners
Ethnic and cultural diversity of our city and our neighborhoods
Unchurched population of over 750,000 within 7.5 miles of our facilities
Many felt needs within the city around us.

Our Programs and Ministries, including covenant ministry partners

- **SERVANTS of CHRIST**
 - **Today**
 - Worship (Contemporary and Traditional bi-lingual)
 - Sunday School and Splash Children's Ministry
 - Choir
 - Praise Jam
 - Bell Choir
 - Wednesday Night Prayer (MM)
 - Several small groups and Confirmation Class
 - **Future** (10 years)
 - 2500 persons involved in 250 small groups weekly
 - Multiple worship services serving 2500 weekly
 - Every Member in Ministry
 - Etc....
- **Covenant Ministry Partners**
 - **Center for Student Mission**
 - Sponsored work teams on site @ PP
 - Work Teams on site, not sponsored
 - **Crossroads @ Park Place** (Homeless Services)
 - Tuesday and Thursday
 - Breakfast/Lunch
 - Place to sleep and be inside
 - Showers
 - Laundry
 - Legal Aid
 - Health Care services
 - Hygiene Kits
 - **Misión Milby Community Development Corporation**
 - GED
 - ESL
 - Computer Labs
 - Computer Classes
 - Prom Parlor
 - HOCK
 - Reclamando Nuestro Futuro
 - Movies on the Lawn
 - Food Distribution following IKE
 - Other programs to meet community needs.

- Shalom Health Ministry
 - Immunizations
 - Well woman and men exams
 - General health care
 - Etc..
- Technology For All
 - Computer Refurbishing
 - TFA-Wireless Network serves the Pecan Park neighborhood
 - Job Training
 - TFA-JobTech
 - Community Technology 2.0

What will our funding consist of? How much?

In 2008 funding from all sources is projected to be around \$700K. If the parish continues to decline as it has been, funding in 2018 will no more than \$150,000.

If we achieve a goal of 2500 members and 1000 in worship, income to the church could approach as much as \$2.5 million a year. To achieve such funding levels, multiple sources of revenue will need to be investigated.

Our assets today and our assets projected in 5-10 years. (members, buildings, property, cash)

As of December 31, 2007, the Servants of Christ United Methodist Parish has the following assets.

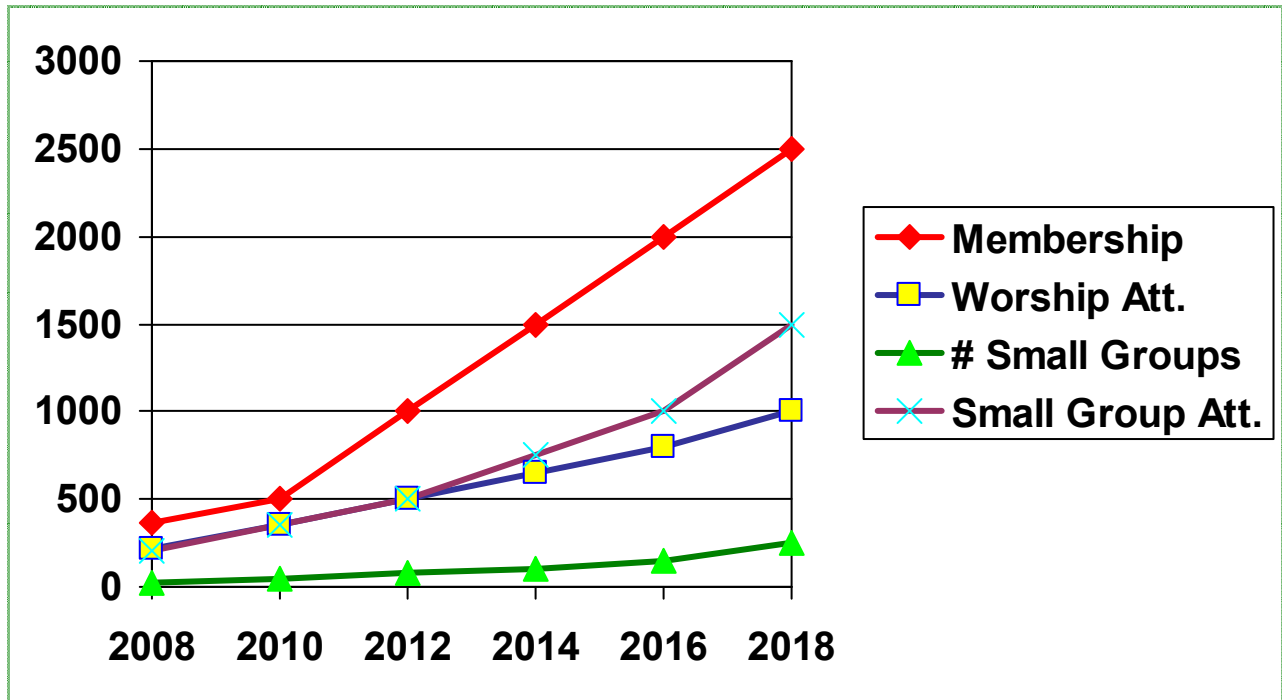
- 460 members
- 238 average worship attendance
- Approximately \$500,000 in cash in restricted and unrestricted funds (including the Servants of Christ United Methodist Foundation)
- 130,102 square feet of space in 13 buildings situated on approximately 11 acres at four locations and valued at almost \$12 million
- 3 parsonages valued at approximately \$450,000

One of the greatest assets of the parish is the highly visible location of the Park Place campus at the intersection of I45 South, Park Place and Broadway. Approximately 250,000 vehicles daily pass the intersection of 610 and I45 South just north of the Park Place campus.

At the current rate of decline, if we do nothing, in ten years the SERVANTS of CHRIST parish churches will have 125-175 members and approximately 75 in worship. At the current rate of giving, the annual contributed income to the parish will be between \$110 and \$154K, which will not be enough income to pay the utilities and insurance at today's rates on the current assets.

If we are proactive and address this decline by creating a new church within the existing church, it is feasible that SERVANTS of CHRIST could have as many as 2500 members in 2018 and 1000 persons in multiple services of worship each week.

OUR FUTURE



What staff does SC project to have and/or need in 5-10 years?

Today, in 2008, the SERVANTS of CHRIST staff consists of 3 fulltime clergy, five part-time music staff, 1.5 FTE office staff and 2 part-time custodial staff.

If the congregation in 2018 becomes a large regional church, as planned, the staff will need to become more diverse and specialized. In addition, additional supportive relationships between the church and its covenant partners will need to be explored in order discover cost savings or infusions of expertise through shared staff resources.

VISION 2018

Recommendations & Work Plan

Vision 2018

By 2018, the SERVANTS of Christ (SC) United Methodist Parish expects to be an active, growing and diverse congregation of 2500 members with an average of 1000 persons in worship each Sunday and over 1500 persons growing in discipleship through involvement in small groups and/or personal places of hands on ministry.

Mission

Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Recommendations and Work Plan

Mission Recommendations

MAKING DISCIPLES FOR JESUS CHRIST - Our vision is to grow the church in ten years from its current membership of 460 to a membership of 2500 at the end of 2018. We will do this by focusing strategically on our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

- 1.1 By early fall 2008 SC will implement a new worship/Sunday School schedule to meet the needs of the diverse community located within 7.5 miles of 610 and I-45. The new worship schedule will include planning for anticipated future worship services and times that will grow weekly worship attendance to over 1000 by December 2018.
- 1.2 By Fall 2008 the Church Council will explore and recommend a plan for the joining together with other churches into the SERVANTS of CHRIST United Methodist Parish.
- 1.3 By January 2009 SC will develop an extensive communications plan to tell the story about our church and its programs to the residents of Southeast Houston. SC will begin implementation of an initial test plan in Fall 2008 with full implementation of the communications plan to begin no later than September 2009.

- 1.4 By December 2008 SC will have identified and/or created at least 25 small groups for personal growth in discipleship.
- 1.5 By June 2009 SC will have developed a plan to grow the number small groups created for personal growth in discipleship from 25 in December 2008 to 250 in December 2018. By September 2009, SC will appoint leadership for the implementation of this plan.
- 1.6 By June 2010 SC will have developed a plan to assimilate new Christians and new church members into the life of the church so as to encourage every person to be engaged in a regular opportunity for personal hands on ministry. Implementation of the plan will begin no later than September 2010.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD - Our vision is that the SERVANTS of CHRIST United Methodist Parish will focus strategically on the transformation of the world around us locally and beyond to work together to improve the quality of life for and with those around us.

- 2.1 By Fall 2009, SC will evaluate its existing covenant relationship agreements for clarity and effectiveness and explore the possibility of additional covenant relationships. By Spring 2010, SC will develop and implement a plan to encourage church member involvement in these collaborative ministries.
- 2.2 By Spring 2011, SC will identify community needs not being addressed and develop a plan and/or additional relationships to organize for community action. Implementation of the plan will begin after approval by the appropriate body in the church.
- 2.3 By Fall 2009, SC will develop a plan to move toward 100% payment of its apportionments, fair share goals, plus other missional giving. The ultimate goal is that SC giving to missions beyond the local church will reach a total of at least 15% of the church's actual operating expenses by 2018.
- 2.4 By 2011, SC will engage in at least one new mission experience per year outside of the greater Houston area.
- 2.5 SC will encourage every member to be involved in some type of mission outreach activity at least annually.

Administrative Recommendations

FINANCES – SC will develop a financial model that is efficient and effective in supporting the overall mission of the SERVANTS of CHRIST parish.

- 3.1 By Fall 2013 the Finance Committee will work with the Trustees, Pastor-Staff Parish Relations Committee, Program Ministry Team and others to develop a budget that is more in-line with the budget priorities of growing churches.
- 3.2 By Fall 2008, the Finance Committee will recommend a five year plan to move toward the goal noted in #3.1.
- 3.3. By 2010, SC will fully support its operating budget and develop a plan to grow those portions of the budget that will create sustainable growth in membership and participation for SC.
- 3.4 By 2018, SC will develop an adequate reserve for operating expenses.
- 3.5 In support of our mission to make disciples for the transformation of the world SC will develop and implement an action plan by 2009 to grow the Servants of Christ United Methodist Foundation from its present value of \$300,000 to over \$5 million by 2018

BUILDINGS & PROPERTY – SC will develop a plan for Buildings and Property that is both affordable and supports that planned growth of the church and its collaborative, covenant ministry partners over the next ten years.

- 4.1 By Fall 2010 the Trustees will have implemented a plan to reduce building operating costs to 30% of the total budget from 42%.
- 4.2 By Spring 2009 SC will develop a relationship with an architect/planner to develop a master building plan for SC by 2010.
- 4.3 SC will review all options for the use of Epworth Parker facility in addition to discussing the value of the property and its options with a

realtor as soon as possible. Any initial recommendations regarding the property will be presented to the church by the end of 2008.

- 4.4 SC will sell other extraneous properties not needed for the Master site and facility plan including lots owned by Garden Villas and Epworth Parker. The sale of such properties will be reinvested in the development of the Master Plan.
- 4.5 The SC trustees will initiate a capital improvement campaign and plan by Fall 2011 as phase one of the Master Plan.
- 4.6 The SC trustees will continue to pursue revenue generating relationships for the use of buildings and property and consider the creation of Master Lease arrangements to off-load property expenses and maintenance to other entities.
- 4.7 SC will review the recommendations made by the Nehemiah Team's facility improvements sub-committee to determine which items can be accomplished quickly and within the structure of the operating budget without any negative impact on the proposed Master Plan. This determination will be made in Fall 2008 for implementation beginning in the 2009 budget year.

STAFFING FOR GROWTH – SC will develop a staffing plan that is affordable and focused on the growth of the church.

- 5.1 By January 2009 the Pastor-Staff Parish Relations Committee will review the current staff budget to plan for efficient use of existing staff resources and by the 2010 budget SC will develop and begin implementation of a plan to staff the church for future growth.
- 5.2 By Fall 2009 the SC Pastor-Staff Parish Relations Committee will develop a plan for a diverse staff that will encourage the growth of the church and mirror the age and ethnic makeup of the region that SC serves.
- 5.3 SC will assign a pastor to oversee the achievement of the goals adopted in this Vision 2018 Strategic Plan by January 2009.
- 5.4 SC will review its pastoral staff roles and responsibilities to include a Pastor or Director of Servant Ministries as soon as possible.

- 5.5 SC will serve as a teaching congregation for persons in preparation for full-time ministry and seek interns to provide additional pastoral leadership for the church.

SUPPORT AND BUY-IN FOR THE VISION – The SC Nehemiah Team and other church leaders will engage and garner widespread support for the goals and objectives of the Vision 2018 plan.

- 6.1 The Nehemiah Team and or its successor will regularly report on the progress of these recommendations to the Church Council and to the congregation as a whole.
- 6.2 At the beginning of each calendar year beginning in January 2009, the church council or other assignee will engage in a detailed review of the progress toward these goals.
- 6.3 A printed report on the work of the Nehemiah Team and its successor(s) will appear at least quarterly in the church bulletin, newsletter and on the web site (www.ServantsNow.org).