



Camphor UMC Listening Session Debrief

Sunday, October 12, 2025

Overview – Listening Sessions

During two weeks in September, listening sessions were offered as a way for the incoming pastor to hear from the congregation as part of my orientation. Thirty eight members of the community participated with a reasonable balance of those newer to Camphor and longer term members. The session focused on four questions.

1. What brought you to Camphor and what keeps you here?
2. What are the strengths of Camphor?
3. What are your hopes and dreams for Camphor in the next 3 – 5 years?
4. What is most important for me to know as I begin my time as your new pastor?

What Brought You and What Keeps You

- **WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO CAMPHOR?**

- An invitation from a friend or a Camphor member
- Visiting /church hopping and was moved by the sermon/pastor
- Left their previous church due to disillusioned/challenging times within the church
- Family connections

- **WHAT KEEPS YOU AT CAMPHOR?**

- Hospitality, fellowship, warmth, spiritual support/deep faith amongst the members
- Feels like a family, relationships
- Historical Black church that's small but mighty

Strengths of Camphor

- Welcoming people and a welcoming environment; invitational; people get along
- Strong and active ministries; participatory
- Committed people who, in the midst of difficult times, stand firmly together
- A strong church community (tenacity, strength, faithfulness, inclusive)
- Strong leadership
- Presence within the broader community (goes beyond the four walls)

Hopes and Dreams in the next 3 – 5 years

- Grow in membership
- Building expansion that allows for expansion of programming
- Cultivate and grow children's and young adult ministry as a priority (relevancy is important)
- Solicit, Cultivate, and retain young families with children
- Return and retention of Bible Study (supports growth of biblical knowledge)
- As an aging church, be open to innovative and creative ways to entice and engage diverse groups. Think intergenerationally and be creative with worship services

Hopes and Dreams in the next 3 – 5 years

- Envision how to expand community collaboration and partnerships that meet both Camphor's needs as well as the community we're called to serve
- Expand beyond the "Faithful Few"; helping others to actualize their gifts and talents by contributing to/for the good of the church
- Grow the music ministry, diversity of music genres
- Inquire and strategic thinking about the Mosque property
- Defining who we are as an African American church within UMC conference. Establish our vision blueprint. Establish a bold vision

Most Important for Pastor Cynthia to know

- Important to get to know and acknowledge/affirm people and where they're at in their spiritual/Christian journey
- To help people navigate through change and be willing to engage in courageous conversations
- We are excited that you are here (pastoral leadership), and we're here to support you. Your presence is important
- Encourage and increase members to tap into their gifts and talents that allow them to be willing and comfortable to step outside their comfort zone to serve

Most Important for Pastor Cynthia to know

- For Camphor to avoid being cliquish, identify voices and faces who are not at the table
- Attention to enhancing the Digital Ministry is critical
- Strengthen or enact a system that welcomes new people
- Improve churchwide communication
- Children, youth, young adults, and young families must be a priority for Camphor to grow

Pastoral Response – Vision led Priorities

Camphor's Mission – To Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world with and emphasis on “Growing in relationship with God, Growing in relationship with each other and Growing in relationship with the community we are called to serve.

1. Spiritually engaging worship that nurtures our congregation in experiencing the heart of God and inspires the congregation to invite others and secondly expands our digital campus
2. Further discerning our vision and 3 to 5 year strategic roadmap
3. Aligning and equipping our leaders for maximum effectiveness
4. Seeking God's direction for collective impact in community engagement (signature ministry)

Pastoral/Leadership – Early Observations

1. Camphor has a high level of congregational engagement and commitment
2. Organizationally, Camphor leans more closely to being open system - *An open system embraces new ideas from the environment. A closed system is usually rigid in nature. Such a system will have little interaction with the surrounding environment.*
3. Camphor is well positioned and prepared to do the necessary work of living into a new ministry life cycle.
 - Successful Stewardship campaigns and grants provided funds to address deferred maintenance and capital improvements
 - Leadership teams laid good ground in developing annual ministry plans and enacting discipline in working the plans
 - When we look at the leadership priorities, we are not beginning at ground zero. These priorities build on actions that are well underway.

Immediate Actions – Priority – Growing our Faith Community

***Spiritually engaging worship* that nurtures our congregation in experiencing the heart of God and inspires the congregation to invite others and secondly expands our digital campus**

1. Reimagining and defining how we, the Worship Team does our work with a focus on collaboration, cooperation and creativity as we plan out the liturgical worship year.
2. Intentionality in ensuring that Sunday worship leaders reflect the fullness of the Camphor community – gender balance, intergenerational and reflective of our historical black and multi-ethnic/multi-racial identities
3. Trustees are making it a priority to purchase screens and projection in the sanctuary
4. Refining our digital and social media presence; Communications Coordinator will be charged with forming a Communications Team and developing and implementing an overall Communications & Social Media Plan

Immediate Actions – Priority - Growing our Faith Community

Generation Next Ministry - Minnesota Conference to provide seed money to add staff to specifically focus on ministry to Children, Youth and their families with a vision of offering wholistic ministry that addresses:

- Faith Formation and Identity in Christ
- Mental Health and Wellness
- Grounding in Cultural Identity

Adult Spiritual Formation

- Effective Nov. 5 launching hybrid Wednesday Evening Bible Study – More details to follow
- Cohesive branding and communications of the various learning/prayer/spiritual formation events offered through Camphor

2026 Priority & Focus

- **Implementing our Communications Plan**
- **Visioning and Strategic Mapping**
 - **Includes prayer, discernment for seeking God's direction; Careful listening related to our signature ministry**
- **Leadership Recruitment, Development and Nurture**
- **Refining and expanding the Stewardship Ministry**
- **Refining and expanding Spiritual Formation Team**

Guiding Principles and Questions

- Spirit-led, God desire and plans over our preferences
- Outcome focused – who is the intended audience and ultimately what is our “Why”. How will lives be impacted for the good
- Strategic in how we maximize for impact and effectiveness based on our capacity.

Questions and Comments

Next Steps & Closing Prayer

- **Next Steps:**

- Hold this ministry and God's plans for us in your prayers; Pray for me and for our leaders.
- As we move forward in living into these priorities, take time to pray, listen for where God may be calling you to engage and use your best time, energies and resources towards helping Camphor grow in our vision.

Closing Prayer

Gracious and Holy God, pour out your Spirit power and blessing on Camphor and our extended community. Revive in me the passion for Jesus to be birthed anew in my heart, my life, in our church.

Deepen my commitment to "be" all you have called and created me to be.

Boldly use me, without limits, delays or excuses, to serve those in need and to show compassion to a hurting world.

Prepare me with renewed energy, commitment and focus to listen more deeply, follow more closely and embrace the Presence and Promise of Christ who is with and for me and us! Amen