



## Woodlake Innovations Implementation FAQs

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*As of January 2021*

### **What is Next Level Innovations (NLI)?**

As a growing church, Woodlake United Methodist Church (UMC) is continuously looking to improve how we serve our community and operate internally. NLI is an investment in churches that have a recognized potential for reaching more people in their community and inviting them to become disciples of Jesus. The opportunity to participate in NLI aligned with Woodlake UMC's goals of continuous improvement.

Beginning in 2018, Woodlake UMC went through the NLI process of prayer, training, discernment and congregational participation.

### **What is the difference between NLI and Woodlake Innovations Implementation?**

NLI was a process of study and discernment managed by a team of church experts under the guidance of our former District Superintendent, Rev. Dr. Pete Moon. The result of this process included recommendations for five areas of innovations in our church.

Following the large affirmative vote in the October 2019 Church Conference (251 for, 13 against), the congregation has taken ownership of the innovations and we began to move forward into the implementation phase for each of the recommended innovations.

Copies of the NLI Final Report are available on the WII Innovation Home Page.

The implementation phase for the recommended innovations was given the name Woodlake Innovations Implementation (WII).

### **What are the innovations?**

There are five major areas of innovations and multiple tasks within each innovation. The highlights are:

**Focus:** Develop a church-wide “signature” mission; establish a discipleship strategy; prioritize church programs (excluding Worship, Adult Discipleship and Missions), and define what it means to be a “Roof Digging Church.”

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**Worship:** Evaluate and align the weekend worship experience with congregational and community needs; assess our four worship services for staff and resource alignment; create a volunteer recruitment and training process; and work with the Staff Parish Relations Committee to establish a Pastor study leave program. In a nutshell, this innovation is a comprehensive review of the weekend worship experience.

In January 2021, the WII Team determined that the scope of the volunteer process redesign should be broader than the initial focus on worship and established a separate innovation focused on a comprehensive **Volunteer Process Redesign**. Accordingly, a team has been formed and is dedicated to the creation of processes to recruit, engage, equip and retain volunteers in the ministries and missions throughout the church and beyond.

**Discipleship:** Define discipleship – what does it mean to be a roof digging disciple; create a discipleship pathway that focuses Woodlake UMC’s efforts in each of the five elements of the discipleship strategy – Worship, Grow, Serve, Give and Share; develop “What We Believe” statements; and establish member engagement guidelines.

Our discipleship strategy is based on the book “The Walk” written by Adam Hamilton. “The Walk” is the title of the sermon series.

*NOTE: Pastor Gordon led a sermon series on each of the five elements of the discipleship strategy in the fall of 2020 (September 13<sup>th</sup> – October 11<sup>th</sup>). These sermons are available online in the sermon video archives at [WoodlakeUMC.org/Livestream](http://WoodlakeUMC.org/Livestream) and at [YouTube.com/WoodlakeUMC](https://YouTube.com/WoodlakeUMC). Look for “The Walk” sermon series.*

**Healthy Staff Culture:** A comprehensive review of Woodlake UMC’s human resources policies and procedures; establish a performance management system and update position descriptions; conduct compensation benchmarking; and develop a strategic staffing plan.

**Generosity and Financial Health:** This innovation has several moving parts that contain individual elements that, when combined, contribute to the overall financial health of Woodlake UMC. They are (1) create a Master Financial Plan (including a communication plan); (2) establish a Stewardship Committee to educate the congregation on the lifelong Christian attribute of stewardship; and (3) investigate the optimal use of our abundant property.



### **How is WII organized to implement the innovations?**

The WII Team was established following the Church Conference in October 2019 to serve as the umbrella organization to oversee the implementation of the innovations. At any one time, approximately 50 or more members and staff are working on the innovations.

Under the WII Team, several teams have been created to work on the innovations. In the case of the Healthy Staff Culture Innovation, the Staff Parish Relations Committee (a standing Woodlake UMC Committee) will oversee the implementation of this innovation. Within the innovation focused on Generosity and Financial Health, a permanent non-voting Stewardship Committee was established by the Church Leadership Council. Also, an ad hoc committee of lay and staff leaders is overseeing the potential sale of a portion of Woodlake UMC's land.

The key take-away from this question is that the teams and committees are all advisory in nature. The final decision on the implementation of any innovation rests with the Church Leadership Council, except certain decisions as delegated by the Council.

### **How is the coronavirus impacting our innovation teams?**

The innovation teams are committed to continuing to move these innovations forward despite the challenges presented by the coronavirus. During this season of social distancing, the teams continue to meet regularly using virtual online conferencing. We do recognize, however, that our initial timelines for implementing the innovations are subject to change as a result of the pandemic.

### **What is a “signature” mission?**

During the NLI process, members of our congregation expressed a strong desire to galvanize the congregation around a core or “signature” mission that is unique to Woodlake UMC. A signature mission focus will help church leaders set priorities, and make important, and sometimes challenging, decisions about what we will or won't do. This will allow Woodlake UMC to optimally align budget, staff, and programming for greater impact. A Mission Design Team has been created as part of our Focus Innovation for this purpose.



## **Will the Saturday and Sunday (pre-COVID) worship services change?**

As part of the Worship Innovation, a team has been assembled that will examine all the individual elements of weekend worship. This examination includes style, times, focus, etc. for each service and as a whole. To accomplish this task, the team plans to visit other churches, conduct surveys and examine the needs of our congregation and community. In addition, multiple focus groups with congregants and local community members are scheduled for late February 2021.

Due to its complexity (and the current social distancing requirements associated with the coronavirus), this innovation has the longest timeline to allow for a period of detailed self-examination, discernment and planning. Currently, the plan calls for decisions to be made in June and any potential changes to be implemented in the fall of 2021.

## **Will our 9:30 live stream service change?**

Due to the continued health risks related to the coronavirus, the live stream service temporarily remains Woodlake UMC's primary worship channel. The weekday worship staff has been working to make the live stream worship experience more accommodating to all, while accommodating "social distancing" requirements. As part of the weekend worship experience, the Worship Innovation team is also reviewing the requirements and benefits of online worship as part of their overall worship redesign.

## **What will change with our current small groups?**

The small group program will remain in effect. Connecting and sharing together in small groups is a vital part of faith development. Small groups make space for deep connection and they are often the places we feel most comfortable in the faith community. Small groups help to make a large congregation feel closer. The discipleship pathway will not change the small group program, but we hope that it will enhance it. Having a framework that helps leaders see how people move through faith development stages in the five elements of our discipleship strategy (Worship, Grow, Serve, Give, and Share) will provide more clarity and intention to small groups. Each group will be encouraged to think about these five elements and examine where their group is thriving and where the group can collaborate to develop in the areas where they may be weaker.



### **What is the timeline for changes?**

Implementation of the NLI Report's innovations is complex because it contains a variety of individual and inter-dependent parts. The timeline was designed to work on the foundational elements identified in our Focus Innovation early in the implementation phase (e.g., discipleship strategy). This will provide the roadmap for the development of other innovations. With that said, work on the innovations began in January 2020 and will follow a schedule of periodic roll-outs of the various innovations. Two of the largest efforts, mission design and worship redesign, are targeted for roll-out in August 2021 and September 2021 respectively to allow sufficient time for consideration and launch planning.

As noted previously, our initial timelines for implementing the innovations are subject to change as a result of the ongoing pandemic.

### **What are the anticipated costs for these innovations?**

Built into the timeline of each innovation is a requirement to submit any resource requirements (people or money) through the WII Team to the appropriate church committee (requests for people would be directed to the Staff Parish Relations Committee and requests for money would be directed to the Finance Committee). The final approval for the implementation of any innovation with a resource requirement is the Church Leadership Council.

### **How can I help?**

By being informed! The WII Team will be communicating regularly about our progress on the innovation implementations. Listen for pulpit updates, read the updates on the Woodlake UMC website ([www.woodlakeumc.org](http://www.woodlakeumc.org)), attend any informational sessions scheduled, etc.

You can also help by completing surveys as they are circulated, talking with the team leaders, team members and Woodlake UMC staff, and by praying for the church and the WII Teams.

### **Where can I get more information?**

The Woodlake UMC website includes information about the WII project as a whole with more detailed information about each innovation. The information is located under Innovations in the



main menu. There will also be printed material available at the Connection Center in the Gathering Space once the Worship Center reopens.

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