

**FUMC Green Wood Task Force
Leadership Council Proposal
5/15/2024**

Executive Summary

The Green Wood Task Force is pleased to provide these recommendations as the conclusion of the first phase of the enhancement of the Saturday evening service and its relocation to the FUMC Ann Arbor downtown campus. See Appendix A for the members of the Task Force and their FUMC volunteer experience.

The work of the Task Force followed the FUMC Facilities Strategic Planning effort of 2022/2023 and addresses strategies for two of the four key initiatives outlined in that project's Recommended Way Forward report:

- "Invest in the growth of the Green Wood community in a new, intimate and accessible setting."
- "Assess and continue to innovate and enliven the online experience, while expanding and growing the online community."

Major points addressed in this report:

- The task force recommends that the future Saturday evening worship service be located in the renovated Chapel and include enhancements to enrich and appeal to a wide range of potential participants.
- *The Service* section of this report identifies plans for service elements, preaching, music, time, atmosphere, culture, and location.
- The service will offer live streaming and develop interactive online participation during worship, as well as the opportunity to later view the recording of the service. The ability of online participants to interact with the on-site participants will enrich the worship experience and provide technological learning and a platform to be used in other FUMC programs. Online **options** mitigate the obstacle to growth imposed by the limits of a tiny sanctuary. Online provides unlimited growth potential.
- We recommend an ambitious marketing and recruitment program be designed and developed starting in the fall of 2024, with a launch of the program immediately upon the relocation of the Saturday evening service. The marketing goal is to achieve an average in-person attendance of 75% capacity and sustained growth on-line. Beyond numbers, the *Who Will Gather in His Name?* section on Page 5 defines what we mean when we say "everyone is welcome" and recognizes the diverse Ann Arbor community and FUMC downtown area from which we will recruit additional members.
- The Green Wood Community is at risk of falling below critical attendance levels. The successful move is dependent on minimizing loss of Green Wood participants, and accepting the challenge to adapt and embrace the opportunities provided by the new location. As noted in the Recommended Way Forward report, the Green Wood transition will require investment from both Green Wood and Downtown communities.
- Timing - It is imperative that the Chapel renovation be complete or, at a minimum, highly functional prior to transition. This requirement implies an accelerated pace for the Chapel design and build-out. Several Green Wood participants have expressed interest in participating in the Chapel Redesign project. The *Location* section on page 6 of this report identifies important components and design features of the renovated Chapel.

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- *Next Steps and Resources Needed* starting on page 8 proposes the formation of specialized teams to work on various aspects of the next phase.
- The 2024/2025 FUMC funding plans should include at least these items:
 - Chapel renovation
 - Music - Funding for Licensing, equipment and salary/labor costs to support a variety of live music options (i.e. a band).
 - Production of Licensing, Audio, Video and Lighting systems that provide enhanced in-person, streaming and an interactive on-line worship experience.
 - Moving - Professional movers for furniture, equipment, the Green Wood cross, and the grand piano.
 - Staffing to support the worship service similar to how the Director of Worship currently supports the downtown service.
- Other required resources may be identified by specialized break-out teams. The relocation will be a joint project between members of the Green Wood community, the downtown community and FUMC staff.

The Green Wood Task Force appreciates the opportunity to complete this first phase of the Green Wood transition. We thank the Leadership Council and Trustees for their engagement with and support of the transition, and look forward to contributing to the growth and thriving of the FUMC community.

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Background

In 2022 and early 2023, FUMC Ann Arbor began a Strategic Planning project which identified four key initiatives for the future FUMC.¹ One of the initiatives is to *“invest in the growth of the Green Wood community in a new, intimate and accessible setting”*. The All-Church Conference of May 7, 2023 authorized the sale of the Green Wood property, no sooner than May, 2024. This minimum one year period prior to the property sale was to *“provide a time of discernment that would include regular Green Wood worshippers and to decide a plan to sustain and grow a non-traditional worship.”*

During the summer of 2023, the FUMC Strategic Task Force held 15 listening and sharing sessions, led by team members, and attended by small groups of people. While some Green Wood members attended the listening sessions, it was a period of grief at Green Wood, in the aftermath of the vote to sell the property. We sadly experienced the departure of some long-time Green Wood members. Despite this, a happy occasion was the celebration of a Green Wood cookout in July, 2023 attended by current and former members, in anticipation of it being one of the last Green Wood cookouts.

In late October, 2023, Senior Pastor Nancy Lynn invited people active in the Green Wood community to volunteer for a Green Wood Task Force.² She requested that the new team develop a proposal for the FUMC Leadership Council that *“includes a vision for a future worship format, time and day of week, location, kick-off time frame and other elements of a worship community that preserves the ‘mojo’ of this community.”* The goal was to outline an enhanced, non-traditional worship service, and an infrastructure to support it. Key questions included the types of people we hope would come to the service, the atmosphere, the style of music, liturgy, and preaching and the kind of space needed to do it well. See Appendix A for a list of the Task Force members and a timeline of key Task Force events and activities that led to the completion of this proposal.

In addition to the original invitation to explore the Strategic Planning initiative related to Green Wood, the Task Force realized in its earliest discussions that the future Green Wood service plan must support the third initiative to *“assess and continue to innovate and enliven the online experience, while expanding and growing the online community.”* Moving to a new, enhanced worship space allows the design and implementation of a technology environment for simultaneous streaming and real time interaction with online participants. A smaller space than the traditional sanctuary and a creative, flexible community are ideal for exploring the opportunities of the online worship service and piloting new ideas.

What’s in a Name?

The original church founded in 1968 and located at 1001 Green Road was Glacier Way United Methodist Church. In 1994, the Glacier Way UMC struggled with membership and finances. First United Methodist Church of Ann Arbor acquired the church from the UMC Conference and renamed it “Green Wood”, part of the FUMC of Ann Arbor Church.

An intriguing question is the name of the service when it moves downtown. The Task Force has discussed the naming of the service several times and will defer to the next phase of the project for a decision. Possibilities discussed include: the Green Wood Service, the Saturday

¹ “First United Methodist Church Facilities Recommended Path Forward”, May 4, 2023

² “Discerning the Future of our Green Wood Worship”, email from Nancy Lynn, October 30, 2023

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Evening Service, the Contemporary Service, the Non-Traditional Service, the Modern Service and the Alternative Service. In addition to the name, development of a several word tagline could further define its identity and serve as a marketing tool. The term “Green Wood service” is used for convenience in this proposal, in advance of the official naming.

A secondary question will be naming the room in which the future service is held. If the name of the service is *not* Green Wood, there may be consideration of including “Green Wood” in the name of the service space.

The Service

From its beginning as Glacier Way UMC and during the Green Wood years, it has combined a traditional Methodist service order with non-traditional elements. The future service will maintain this balance, will try new ideas, and will keep relevant, appealing service elements. It will be intentionally creative and nimble. Organizers will actively seek feedback from participants to determine which elements are well received and serve one or more intended purposes: education, inspiration, comfort, joy, celebration, calming, or community-building. We want people to feel the Holy Spirit.

Traditional Service Components

The service will contain the traditional components of a Methodist service, some of which will match the FUMC Sunday morning traditional service each weekend:

- Pastoral Greeting after the opening music and Pastoral Blessing after the closing music.
- Invitation to greet each other. This is largely the same at both services, though there is more ability to move around at Green Wood. It’s not unusual for someone to cross the room to greet a friend.
- Call to Worship—call and response prayer with pre-written stanzas alternating a single prayer leader and congregational responders.
- Scripture Reading—one passage, generally read by a congregant.
- Sermon—the pastor of the Sunday service will also preach the same sermon at the Green Wood service. An exception may be occasional guest pastors or speakers.
- Communion service on the first Saturday of the month.

Keeping and Enhancing Green Wood Elements

Some service elements at Green Wood are delivered differently than the FUMC Sunday service. Beloved traditions which will continue are:

- Announcements are delivered each week by a Green Wood hospitality coordinator. Phyllis Hill currently fulfills this role, and is deliberately welcoming, cheerful, and informal.
- The time of prayer is largely composed of celebration or concern prayers asked by participants for themselves, friends or relatives, our community, country or world. Raising hands and being called upon by the pastor will continue. The pastor follows the participant’s prayers with a summary prayer. The time of prayer ends with everyone saying The Lord’s Prayer.
- A “special” at Green Wood is an artistic performance or sharing by the Green Wood musicians, congregants or guest artists. Music is the most common type of special, and other types have varied over the years. Enhancements for future specials include:
 - Inviting youth from FUMC to play instruments or sing as guest artists.
 - Re-introducing drama skits on a monthly basis, also including FUMC youth.
 - Inviting regular participants or guest artists to perform or introduce other types of art as part of the worship service. Examples include paintings, photographs, sculptures, poetry, readings, or videos.
 - Inviting regular participants to share their experiences in serving outside the walls of FUMC as “the hands and feet of Christ”. The presenter’s experiences with a nonprofit or project

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will offer a connection point if someone is interested in learning more about the organization. And to confirm and emphasize that an important part of our Christian faith is serving others in need.

Preaching

Green Wood has appreciated a variety of pastors leading our service and preaching through the decades. There were periods of times when a single pastor had predominant responsibility for Green Wood. We like the current system of the same pastor, deacon or guest speaker preaching at both services, Saturday evening and Sunday morning.

Music

Love of music unites the downtown FUMC participants with Green Wood people. However, the musical styles are different. Our objective at Green Wood is to have enthusiastic singing by the participants, particularly in the opening and closing music. It's important to have familiar, easy to sing songs for those selections. New songs are also welcome, with the intent to repeat them in future services. We embrace John Wesley's guidance to "Sing all. Sing lustily and with good courage".³

Green Wood has historically been associated with folk music. Our lead soloist for many years, Katie Geddes, also produced the Green House Coffee House on Friday evenings. Those professional musicians frequently came back on Saturday to sing two songs during our service. This rich heritage of exceptional music at Green Wood will be honored and we will embrace gospel, praise, folk, Christian rock, and beloved hymns. We are grateful for the amazing musicians who have enriched our services with their talent and faith.

We will recruit/hire a band which is flexible and lively. Growing the numbers of people attending the service and participating in other FUMC activities will be facilitated by diversity in our musicians and musical choices.

Time of Service

The service will continue to be 5:00 pm on Saturdays. This day and time will facilitate growth of the FUMC membership because it's an important alternative for:

- Young adults, or others who like to sleep later on Sunday mornings
- Families with Sunday morning obligations, particularly when their children are on sports teams
- People enjoying restaurants and events in downtown on Saturday evenings. The service ends at an ideal time to go onto another activity.
- People who work on Sundays.
- FUMC members who normally attend Sundays, but occasionally need or like a change of time/day.

Atmosphere and Culture

The casual, welcoming atmosphere will continue at our new location. The March, 2024 survey of Green Wood community members⁴ showed that the casual atmosphere was rated as the highest importance of the other Green Wood elements. See Appendix C for the survey results. Green Wood is a "wear what you want, be who you are" kind of place. All types of folks are welcomed and valued. Green Wood is currently a congregation of primarily older adults, though a couple families attend with their teens. There are many people who attend without a partner, whether they are single or their life partner does not attend church. We have folks of all economic levels, although it isn't obvious who's where on the economic

³ John Wesley's Select Hymns, 1761

⁴ Green Wood Survey Responses, Collected March 2024, N = 32

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ladder, thanks to our culture of being non-ostentatious. We are accepting of all gender-identifications and relish the fact that Green Wood people initiated the FUMC Ann Arbor LGBTQ+ inclusion work which resulted in the 2007 Welcoming Statement. Green Wood feels like a place where everyone knows your name.

Green Wood is intentionally and enthusiastically welcoming. The small size of the foyer/narthex and worship space means a newcomer will be greeted warmly, at least twice: in the narthex by the greeter and very likely after selecting a seat. Unlike larger churches with big sanctuaries, it is almost impossible to walk into Green Wood without being noticed and greeted. There's lots of chatter and standing around pre-service, but also people who like to take seats and be contemplative. Our overhead TV screen provides a rolling set of announcements and a paper bulletin provides something to look at for a newcomer. And a very important feature of Green Wood is the snack table in the back of the worship space. Participants are invited to serve themselves snacks and non-alcoholic drinks before, during or after the service.

Location

Since the vote to permit the sale of Green Wood, the moving of the future service has caused grief and consternation. The glass chapel in the woods that is today's Green Wood is impossible to replicate. Our challenge is to embrace the possibilities and opportunities of a new space downtown.

The proposed location is the downtown first floor Chapel, after a renovation of the space. Key factors influencing this decision:

- The size is appropriate for a small, intimate service. Our current goal is to grow our typical in-person count from 25-ish to 50-ish, with additional participants online. A renovated Chapel, with the circle walls removed, will accommodate that number.
- There is an outside, accessible entrance off the promenade driveway, steps away from the entrance to the Chapel. This is appealing to newcomers who won't have to navigate the complexity of the downtown campus. It is also essential for participants who are unable to walk long distances. It's next to the children's playground, which is appealing to families for after-service lingering and socializing.
- Although downtown Ann Arbor is increasingly urban, after renovation, two walls of the Chapel will have windows overlooking greenery, plus it has the energy of people walking by.
- For those people walking by, there are six months of a Michigan year when windows can be open to attract their attention and interest, particularly when there is music.
- The Chapel has air-conditioning, an important factor for encouraging summer-time attendance. Functioning climate control is essential to ensure comfort in all of the Michigan seasons.
- We will continue to have comfortable chairs, including adequate space between chairs. Easily moveable chairs will allow angled seating for clear sight lines, and the room will be flexible for other uses during the week.
- There is room at the front for a performance stage. The detailed design is pending, but we recognize the benefit of elevation for musicians and speakers and we will have the space under the stage for the electrical supplies and cords needed to support a band.
- A renovation will yield lighting, sound, screens, speakers, and other components necessary for professional-standard streaming, online participation, and video production. We expect those at home to be welcomed and have the ability to participate actively in the service if they attend in real time. There will be screens for the in-person attendees, the online attendees and the performers/speakers. There may be different information on the screens, as appropriate for these users.

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- Ample, free parking is necessary and the downtown “Air Garage” will be turned off for the hours of setup, service, and post-service activities. While we hope to welcome new members from the surrounding neighborhoods, we realize many of our current and future members will drive to church. In an urban setting, free parking is an attractive feature.

Who will Gather in His Name?

This important question is driving many of the decisions of the future service. While it’s easy to say “everyone is welcome”, we intend to have a vigorous and ongoing marketing, invitational and recruitment campaign. Green Wood currently has the welcoming part mostly achieved. (There could be improvements in capturing contact information of newcomers and doing followup.). However, marketing and inviting needs enhancement. We look forward to working with the FUMC staff assigned to these efforts to pilot new ideas.

A common response to the recruitment question focuses on families with children. This is indeed a traditional source of new members, particularly when younger parents want to expose their children to the Christian traditions of the parents’ childhoods. FUMC Ann Arbor is known for its excellent children and youth programs. The future Green Wood service will certainly welcome children, and will continue to have child-appropriate snacks and craft opportunities. As needed, we will incorporate the Children’s program elements used for Sunday School. We are happy to have children remain in the service, and smile at their energy and young voices. Even if they’re interrupting during the service!

Despite our future plans to welcome families, we realize that we are moving to a downtown location where people living nearby or walking past the church are frequently Gen Z’ers and Millennials, single people, unhoused people, empty nesters who’ve moved to downtown residences, unchurched and other folks that don’t fit the “families with children” category. We also acknowledge that people associated with the University of Michigan and Ann Arbor tend to be highly educated, unchurched, and skeptical of any whiff of Christian nationalism or exclusion. We have to be visible and actively invitational to all people. Not a Methodist? Not a problem. Not a believer? That’s ok, we offer a supportive environment for the doubters and skeptics. Have PTSD from bad church experiences? We understand, and welcome you with open arms.

“Demographics” and “bring in young people” are phrases frequently heard in church marketing conversations. We prefer “cohorts” which can be all ages, but have characteristics that tie people together in groups. We will carefully observe which cohorts respond to our marketing and invitations, and will solicit feedback on what’s important to them. Flexibility, evaluation, and nimbleness are our new Green Wood mantras. We will meet the needs of those who come through our doors.

The Online Experience

The COVID pandemic launched FUMC into the world of online worship. FUMC staff and volunteers responded with innovation, creating a vehicle for delivering online worship that continues to this day.

Early in our project, the Green Wood Task Force embraced the opportunity to enhance our online capabilities in harmony with the church’s Strategic Planning online initiative. The Green Wood service will build on that foundation and extend our experimentation and evaluation of the online experience. A key enhancement available in the smaller room of the Chapel is the active participation of online worshippers. A “Zoom-like” experience will

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allow them to interact with worship. There will be times in the worship when we will hear their voices, e.g., during the Time for Prayer or Greetings. We will always see their faces and will encourage them to be visible rather than avatars. Though avatars are ok—another cohort! Some participation features may require log-in, which offers the benefit of providing security as well as having contact information for followup. Finally, the smaller space and ability to incorporate studio-style lighting and audio components will let us record our services and performances for later viewing or for potential newcomers to check us out safely and comfortably online.

Because we will continue to rely on trained volunteers to run the technology during services and for other FUMC purposes, it is essential that there be a simple technology interface which interacts with the complex background technology. There are commercially available applications which serve the purpose of a simple technology interface.

Next Steps and Resources Needed

Investment by FUMC in the implementation of the Green Wood transition is essential. A project plan incorporating the scope, schedule, and resources is highly recommended. **Bolded items indicate potential inclusion in the 2024/2025 FUMC budget.**

- Formally close the Proposal phase and disband the current Task Force upon Leadership Council review of the Proposal and approval to proceed to the next Design phase.
- Create new teams. Current Task Force members will join teams which suit their interests and talents. Invite and recruit additional members of the Green Wood and downtown communities to participate in the teams.
 - a. Celebrating Green Wood Team—plan and implement final events to remember and celebrate the decades of Glacier Way UMC and Green Wood. These will include a fall cookout, activities during the Christmas season, and a formal Methodist church decommissioning service in 2025 just prior to the moving of the service. Participation in the FUMC Fall Kickoff will provide a focus on the future.
 - b. Worship Team—This team already started in late 2023 to improve the scheduling of the volunteers who support the Green Wood service: greeters, hospitality, and readers. Better communications online and in the bulletin regarding Green Wood activities has been achieved and will continue. The team will further define elements of the future Green Wood service, including non-music specials.
 - c. Music Team—This team already started in early 2024 and worked with Dr. Sam Cook, Green Wood musical director, to diversify the music currently offered at Green Wood. In addition, **this team will identify requirements for additional musicians to form a new band, and recruit/hire accordingly.**
 - d. Chapel Renovation Team—Green Wood representatives will participate in the FUMC project to redesign the Chapel for the future Green Wood service, other worship/religious events, and activities during the work week at FUMC. This team will also address strategies for parking, directional signage, and access/security within the downtown campus.
 - e. Technology Team—prepare detailed design of technology components in conjunction with the FUMC Chapel Renovation team. Determine components to move from the current Green Wood location. **Prepare a list of additional components, sourcing options and costs.**
 - f. Invitation and Welcoming—work with FUMC Communications staff to develop flyers, banners, social media posts and postal campaigns so we are ready to launch them immediately upon the new location launch.

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- g. Project Management Team—leaders of the teams listed above and project coordination staff and volunteers will ensure there is cross-team communication and completion of the project in a timely manner within budget. This team will also provide regular updates to the Green Wood community, FUMC Trustees, the Leadership Council, and others as needed.
 - h. Move Team—plan and implement the logistics of the move. Determine items to be moved downtown and incorporated in the new space, e.g., Green Wood cross. Organize actual packing and moving, including recruitment of volunteers to help.
- Create Schedule fellowship opportunities for “downtown” and “Green Wood” people to intermingle and achieve the goal of “One Church”. This includes participation and a Green Wood table at the 2024 Fall Kickoff celebration.

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Appendix A Green Wood Task Force Members

The Task Force members primarily worship at Green Wood. The calendar years in parentheses indicate the start of their membership at Glacier Way UMC or Green Wood/FUMC Ann Arbor and their FUMC activities past and present. The Task Force is grateful for the participation of Pastor Nancy Lynn and Susan Katz McFall, a professional facilitator, during the final months of this project.

- Tori Booker (1999) Missions team, Church & Society, FUMCN Board of Directors, Green Wood Children's Coordinator, Committee on Lay Leadership, Immigrant Hospitality Team, Justice League
- Marianne Clauw (2003) Youth Counselor, Outreach Committee, Stewardship/Pledge Campaign leader, Leader of FUMC and UM Kenya service trips through FUMC and the Facilities Strategic Plan project.
- Lee Featheringham (1999) Green Wood Greeter Coordinator, SPRC Committee, Coffee House support
- Mike Fedel [1995] Green Wood musician, Audio-Video team, Worship Planning and Design (incl slides and bulletin , alternating with Katie Geddes, 2022-2023),
- Jan Fogler [1968] Member of Access Committee; Member of Asbury Bell Choir; and Leader of a small group for caregivers.
- Dan Hill (2003) - Leadership Council, Finance Committee, Communications Committee, Welcome Team, Green Wood Audio Video Lighting lead, marketing strategist
- Phyllis Hill (1996) - Green Wood hospitality and altar preparation, Finance Committee, Counting of downtown offering, Worship Planning and Design, Lay Leadership, UMW President 2013-2016, Treasurer United Women in Faith, Memorial Committee, Welcome Team, Downtown Connections (UWF, Welcome Team), Advent Teas
- Robert Langdon (2002) - SPRC, Leadership Council, Finance Committee and Youth Counselor
- Granville Lee (2005), Membership Class 2007, Celebration Singers, Stephen Ministry Training, Saturday Men's Group, Special Events Photographer, Memorial Garden Committee.

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**Appendix B
Activities and Milestones**

D	Event or Communication
2	
O	John Kaczor and Nancy Lynn update at Green Wood service.
O	Email from Nancy Lynn "Discerning the Future of Our Green Wood Worship" announces the opportunity for individuals active in the Green Wood community to volunteer as members of the Task Force.
N	Nancy Lynn announces the Task Force membership, which consists of all those who volunteered in response to the invitation. No volunteers were declined.
D	Kick-off planning session with John Kaczor, lay leader of the FUMC Strategic Planning, Nancy Lynn, Ruth Kaczor (note-taker), and the Task Force.
2	
D	The Task Force meets every two to three weeks via Zoom. Detailed meeting notes are distributed by email, and subsets of the group are assigned areas of interest to research and develop recommendations. These include music/coordination with Dr. Sam Cook, general research regarding church participation in the USA, ideas for future Green Wood "specials" during worship, advancing online worship and the use of technology, improvement of Green Wood announcements within the overall FUMC community, and improved organization of Green Wood volunteers to support and participate in the Saturday services. Immediate enhancements and progress was made in the areas of music, specials, communications, and volunteer organizations.

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F	Following a shortened regular Green Wood service, the Task Force presents an update to the congregants, consisting of a slide presentation and Q/A with the audience. ⁵ Prior to the Task Force presentation, Dan Hill independently presents several slides with alternative ideas.
F	A survey is distributed to the people in attendance at the update presentation, and also sent to the Green Wood email distribution the following week. The survey includes questions about priorities, preferences, and ideas for the future of the Green Wood service and location.
F	The Leadership Council receives the Task Force slide presentation at their regular monthly meeting.
F	32 survey responses are received. See Appendix C for survey questions and results.
M	Anne Cox, Chair of the FUMC Trustees, leads two tours of the downtown FUMC building to look at potential rooms for the future Green Wood service. Task Force members and several other Green Wood participants view potential sites including the first floor Chapel, the second floor Calkins room, and the Wesley lounge. Anne's news that FUMC plans to renovate the Chapel and include Green Wood participants in the design effort is well-received.
M	In response to the Task Force's request for an independent facilitator, Nancy Lynn proposes Susan Katz McFall a professional nonprofit consultant not affiliated with FUMC. Susan interviews with members of the Task Force on March 16 and is approved and welcomed to the project.
A	Susan leads four in-person Task Force meetings to establish group norms, make decisions, fine-tune recommendations, and move toward completion of a May, 2024 proposal to the Leadership Council.

⁵ Green Wood Update, February 24, 2024, a slide presentation by the Task Force

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M	The Green Wood congregation receives a brief verbal overview of the proposal during the Announcements period of the regular service and is encouraged to participate in future phases of the transition project.
M	This proposal is emailed to the Green Wood community and posted online for the Leadership Council members to read in advance of a discussion at the May 21 Leadership Council meeting.

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Appendix C

Survey Snapshot - see "[Green Wood Survey 2024 Snapshot results.pdf](#)"

Survey Results - see "[Green Wood Survey Results-2024.pdf](#)"