Using Design to Facilitate Personal Engagement in a Church Community
A Service Design Approach

Randall Blair, University of Kansas
The Project

Small to mid-sized community churches face many challenges developing the services that will fulfill the needs of members and non-members and deliver them in a way that fits the way we live in a modern society. Their long-term survival depends largely on their ability to attract and engage prospective members. Exploration of this topic has shown that the level of affinity, understanding of culture, volunteer opportunities and a feeling of authenticity towards engagement with the community are critical factors for people deciding where to put their physical and emotional energy.
The Question

How can design help visitors feel comfortable with a Church belief system while also encouraging personal connections and engagement?
What is Service Design?

“Design for experiences that reach people through many different touch-points, and that happen over time.”

http://www.servicedesign.org/glossary/service_design/
Key Characteristics of a Service

Intangibility.
The offering is largely or wholly intangible.

Heterogeneity.
The offering is different each time it is consumed.

Inseparability.
Production and consumption are inseparable.

Perishability.
The offering cannot be stored in inventory.

User-Centered Design Model

Definition

Discovery

Design

Delivery

ABSTRACT

KNOW

MAKE

CONCRETE
Case Study

Valley View United Methodist Church (Church) Body Building
The Concern

Membership is at its lowest point in the last 16 years (1995-2010)

Numbers attending worship are at their lowest point

Percentage of members worshipping has remained flat – about 37%

Source: Valley View United Methodist Church
907 members of Valley View United Methodist Church as of August 2010.

Membership by Age

- 14-19: 88
- 20-29: 88
- 30-39: 131
- 40-49: 128
- 50-59: 131
- 60-69: 172
- 70-79: 150
- 80-89: 92
- 90-99: 13

47% of members are more than 60 years old.

Discovery

85 stated ministries.
17 part-time staff members.

Source: Valley View United Methodist Church
Several opportunities, such as the choir, are available for members to participate in the worship service.

Servant Cafe is an area that provides a casual atmosphere for social interaction on Sundays.

The sanctuary is a non-traditional six-sided room that gives an “in the round” worship experience.
Hope Chest food pantry feeds and clothes hundreds of local families per month.

Evening Care gives developmentally disabled adults a safe place for social interaction and friendship.

Preschool Moms Club is a group that gives support and networking for mothers with young children.

Photos by Noel Klein
Discovery

Tools and Systems
Discovery

Tools and Systems

![Image of computer screens showing church website and Facebook page]

POWER CHURCH PLUS
Information and Environment
**EXPERIENCE**

**Moments of Truth**

**TOUCHPOINTS**

**Visitors, Church Visitors Journey**

**BASELINE**
- finding information
- parking lot
- entering the building
- finding child care
- finding the sanctuary
- filling out visitor card
- worship participation
- finding children
- finding the cafe
- existing the building
- finding car
- receiving a visitor

**ENHANCED**
- big building
- plenty of parking
- didn't see visitor parking
- elevator was quick
- childcare was available
- seating a lot of people for service
- unique sanctuary
- didn't single out visitors
- good style of service
- met a nice helpful man
- learned about the community
- social areas were active
- crowded cafe
- parked for coming
- non-pushy follow-up from church

**DIMINISHED**
- website was hard to use
- unsure where to go next
- finding a room is confusing
- child care lacked security
- unsure we could find kids easily after

**MODE**

**ANTICIPATION**

- finding information
- parking lot

**ENTRY**

- entering the building
- finding child care
- finding the sanctuary

**ENGAGEMENT**

- filling out visitor card
- worship participation
- finding children
- finding the cafe
- existing the building
- finding car
- receiving a visitor

**REFLECTION**

- exiting parking was easy
- parked for coming
- non-pushy follow-up from church

**NARRATIVE**

Made a decision to go to church on Sunday. Haven’t gone since the kids were born. Not particularly about it. Decided to have a local church.

Google search.

Looked at the Valley View website for locations and times. Wasn’t sure so we were able to find the basic information. Not sure exactly what they are about but it is close so we’ll give it a try.

Got everyone ready in time.

Drove to the church, plenty of parking in front. Didn’t see the visitor parking area until we were walking to the main entrance. mildly apprehensive. Wish we knew how to look for it.

Building huge-size kind of big.

We get turned around and go down a flight of stairs to the sanctuary. It is.

There is a friendly person next to the sanctuary who greets us and asks us to sign our child on the sheet on a clipboard. Seems ok. We can’t tell if this is the same level as the sanctuary or not but it assume it is.

We take a couple of minutes to find the toddler room in the preschool area.

We go up the elevator. The stairs to the sanctuary are easy to see. teenager is right in front of us. Not sure about the toddler room. I am sure if this is the same level as the sanctuary or not but I assume it is.

We are asked to fill out a small form on the bulletin to register attending a service. During the service we are asked to fill out a form. Pastor delivers a message about that, but I don’t know if this is the service.

We wish there was participation. Everyone is able.

It seemed comfortable. Pastor didn’t seem too pushy which was nice.

We were very happy to find the room and go down the hallway.

The pastor introduced themselves to us when we were waiting to start. That made us feel good.

Pastor didn’t seem too pushy.

We didn’t really talk to anyone even though we had a chance. It was nice.

A nice older man showed me the room which was very nice.

He asked if we were new and if we wanted to get a cup of coffee and a muffin. “Sure!” We were very happy.

We went to the local church on Sunday. We were thanked for coming by the people at the door.

We could see the front door from our seats so we headed for the exit. We were thanked for coming by the people at the door.

We felt good about the morning overall. I told someone a representative from the church stopped by with a gift of cocoa and some cocoa mix and a note. They did not ask to come in just to deliver the mug. It was pretty easy to find the car. We were thanked for coming by the people at the door.

When we got home we felt good about the morning overall. A couple of days later I pulled out that mug of coffee and reminded me to give them another try. Maybe next time we will know a little more about how things work.
Needs Cluster Analysis

This strategy looks to create an intersection between customer requirements (what they want to achieve) and customer behavioral modes (how they go about achieving it).
Participant Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Outsider</th>
<th>Insider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passive</strong></td>
<td>Comfortable with the culture</td>
<td>Helps drive the organization culture and values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wants to understand</td>
<td>Experienced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wants to be involved</td>
<td>Creates opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has few or no connections</td>
<td>Knows the system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Needs guidance</td>
<td>Has many connections</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Will make time to serve</td>
<td>Well-known in the organization</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is proactive</td>
<td>Champions the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not well known by insiders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passionate</strong></td>
<td>Knows little about the organization culture and values</td>
<td>Knows what opportunities are available</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rare involvement</td>
<td>Is very protective of time</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simply a user of the services</td>
<td>Feel it is “someone else’s turn”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May not be affiliated with the organization</td>
<td>Is satisfied with status quo</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has the potential to be engaged</td>
<td>Must have low barriers</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
User Behavioral Modes

This set of behavioral modes defines the different ways users approach, engage, interact with, and even think about member communities.

**Community Consumer Outsider**
...utilizes the service offerings of the community without additional ties to the community. Has potential to become more involved but may only use the services and have no interest in further engagement.

**Cautious Outsider**
...has had unsatisfactory experiences with previous communities. Resists engagement unless asked. Is curious about the community but wants to be certain they are comfortable before making even small commitments.

**Affinity Seeking Outsider**
...wants to be in a community primarily where they feel a strong affinity with the beliefs, messages, and actions of its members. Overall environment is critical to their satisfaction.

**Altruistic Outsider**
...wants to be in a community primarily to perform acts of service to the general public they can be fully committed to. They are comfortable with the communities’ values and would like to make personal connections. They have a can-do attitude when committed.

**Welcoming Insider**
...wants to ensure anyone that wants to be part of the organization can be. Willing to do what is necessary for the betterment of the community. Acts as a mentor to new and interested people.

**Territorial Insider**
...is satisfied with the community status quo and does not mind change as long as it doesn’t impact them. Mainly interacts with the same people. Has carved out their own space in the community and has little interest in engaging with new people.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personae</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Marie</th>
<th>Allen</th>
<th>Jennifer</th>
<th>Marco</th>
<th>Paul</th>
<th>Helen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Consumer Outsider</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Altruistic Outsider</td>
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<tr>
<td>Territorial Insider</td>
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Marie is an unemployed single mother of two girls. She has received food and some clothes for school from the church Food Pantry on two occasions since she lost her job. She does not attend a church but would love to find a way to “give back” once she gets back on her feet.

Allen had a bad experience with his previous church and some of the members there. He is very careful now with his time and trust. He is a musician and would love to use that talent in a church community. But he will take his time to make sure it is the right fit before committing.

Jennifer and her husband are both looking for a church that provides them with a complete spiritual experience. The pastoral message, the type of service, the music, where people put their time, even the building architecture are all important. They want a complete sense of “belonging.”

Marco has spent many hours volunteering with the church on different projects after first visiting six months ago. He really likes the service-oriented focus of the church. He wants to find ways to get more deeply involved but doesn’t know anyone yet. When he finds an activity he is passionate about he is “all in.”

Paul is one of the “go to” members of the church. He has served as a leader on too many committees to count, but he knows that can’t last forever. He loves the community and will do whatever he can to seek out the “new blood.” He is a mentor and helps to get them involved wherever they can.

Helen has been a member of the church for more than 20 years. The church is a strongly engrained part of her life. She has seen it grow and was happy to be a part of that growth. But now she is satisfied where the church is and really resists any change that may affect her.
Definition

Outcome Requirements

Requirements are formed by assessing more intangible things like motivations, preferences, hopes, and desired outcomes. “What are they trying to achieve” is a useful refrain for driving this analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment Details</td>
<td>The user needs to clearly understand the time required and logistics before committing to an activity or group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity Management</td>
<td>The user needs the ability to manage communication, group involvement and donations of time and money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Information</td>
<td>The user needs information to understand the beliefs, values and culture of the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Connections</td>
<td>The user should be able to make new personal connections and strengthen existing ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available Services</td>
<td>The user should be able to explore the services offered by the community to the public.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genuine Welcome</td>
<td>The user should feel genuinely welcomed and included in the community.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Requirements Matrix

### Design Focus Areas
- Authenticity and Hospitality
- Communicate Community Culture
- Community Activity Management
- Socialization and Mentoring

### Table

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<td>⬤</td>
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<tr>
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### Solutions Architecture

#### Outward

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<th>Authenticity and Hospitality</th>
<th>Welcoming People</th>
<th>Welcoming Systems</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visitor Ambassadors</td>
<td>Enhance Hope Chest Waiting Experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking Attendant</td>
<td>Visitor-Specific Building Map</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality Training Program</td>
<td>More Distinctive exterior signage (parking &amp; entrance)</td>
<td></td>
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<th>Modular Messaging</th>
<th>Hit the Streets</th>
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<td>Information Card Kit</td>
<td>Enhance Hope Chest Waiting Experience</td>
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<td>Consistent brand and voice</td>
<td>Visitor-Specific Building Map</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bolster the online presence</td>
<td>More Distinctive exterior signage (parking &amp; entrance)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Regular messaging refresh</td>
<td>Classify “Zones” of the building for easier navigation</td>
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#### Inward

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<tr>
<th>Community Activity Management</th>
<th>Manage Opportunities</th>
<th>Manage Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear descriptions of opportunities</td>
<td>System to notify members of activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create short-commitment opportunities</td>
<td>System to track, measure and report efforts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicize opportunities &amp; events online</td>
<td>Display aggregate activities to congregation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<th>Socialization and Mentoring</th>
<th>Non-Sunday Groups formed around interests</th>
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<tr>
<td>Small Group Matching/Connecting by life stage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newbie+Old Guard Mentor Program</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Small Group Invitation System</td>
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</table>
Create Concepts

- System to notify all church members of activities
- Better/robust Facebook online presence
- Welcome Kit in a DVD case with cards
- Coordinate Service opportunities with other agencies
- Publicize ALL even Sunday worship
- Create low-barrier walk-in low-cost
Create Concepts

Authenticity and Hospitality
- Visitor Ambassador
  - Greeting/Information Desk right when you come in the main entrance
  - Greeter Scripts
  - have greeters available dedicated to visitors as guides on Sunday
  - Ready when the visitor arrives
  - Follow up to ask visitors to come to activities not just Sunday service

Modular Information Kit
- use real people in communication
- Visitor Packets (info on church, your visit, ways to engage, feedback mechanism)
- Online and offline
- Prioritize what are the main service areas and create cards for those.

Identity System
- Consistent Branding
- Need full identity system, not just logo
- Communications guidelines

Public Website
- Web site must reflect culture and value. Main external touchpoint
- Provide new-member class style information BEFORE people say they will be members
- better description of the Sunday schedule and service
- Full listing of all services offered with good descriptions and contact information
- Let the website be the church when the church is closed

Develop External Communication Guidelines
- Q&A with the pastor for better understanding of the message from the pulpit
- Try to illustrate the experience with the church
- People are looking for what THEY can do in the church, what interests THEM
- Don’t talk about things as if everyone knows what it means. example: ALPHA, non-churched or non-methodists might have no idea what that is or why they should do it.
- Find ways to digitize communication and delivery. Reduce offline artifacts.

Communication Community Culture
- Church Connection Online
  - Online tool (with offline procedures a backup)
  - Register “membership/account”
  - Use to volunteer for opportunities and recruit
  - Sign up for events and services. Manage giving and payments, Join small groups, Register attendance
  - Mobile app to access the online connection
  - Receive messages from members via the tool
  - Submit prayer requests
  - Organize events and invite others
  - Connect to other social media Facebook, linked in
  - Need coordinated way to contact volunteers and new people so they don’t feel overwhelmed
  - Instant messages to members (email, text message) From small group or church wide or special opportunity messaging
  - Be able to track individual and immediate family activity in a dashboard-style report for the member
  - Be able to “check in” to church or activity
  - incentives to build a profile.
  - Interface must be very easy to use and highly legible with simple language

Socialization and Mentoring
- Service Mentoring Program
  - Mentor program with “insiders”
  - Connect people by experiences
  - Visitor connected to dedicated person right from the start
  - Church directory online with photos and contact information, Photos of members, Family relationships (Father of, etc...)
  - Member “resume” of jobs done/held (as church volunteers and as careers) so others can find people with experience

Access Points Within the Church to the Connection Website
- Kiosks in public spaces of the church incentives for users to build complete profiles.
- Terminals or access points to be used by small groups or classrooms to register, checkin etc

Develop Social Opportunities
- Enhance the cafe to expand its usage on Sundays and for other events
- Support social as well as service opportunities
- Try to make service opportunities a SOCIAL experience have a way to send immediate help needs and message members about it
- Find ways to get people to work cooperatively in projects to make connections
- Create areas to facilitate social interaction

Design
Storyboard Viable Concepts

1. **Virtual Introductions**
   - Visitors can indicate online ahead of time they will visit, via “Let us know you will be coming, we’ll meet you!” section of website.
   - Ambassador will contact them via email beforehand to find out more about them and their visit.
   - Ambassador compiles a visitor packet of information relevant to them.

2. **Make them feel at home**
   - Ambassador meets them at the main entrance prepared to make their visit a great one.
   - Greets them by name, shakes each person’s hand.
   - Escorts them to take coats, get children settled, provides them visitor packet.
   - Escorts them to the sanctuary. Introduces them to the people around them. Explains children’s moment if necessary.
   - Asks if they may meet them outside the doors after the service to get their children or to invite to coffee in the cafe.
   - Has a quick chat in the cafe if wanted. Gives them a contact card if they have questions.

3. **Follow-Up**
   - Follow up with thank you and relevant opportunities and invitations.

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1. **Catalog of Available Information Cards**
   - A series of information cards are designed and prepared to describe the major aspects of the community and the services they provide. Card topics might include:
   1. What we believe.
   2. Sunday Worship
   3. Hope Chest Food Pantry
   4. Preschool Program
   5. Upward Basketball and Cheerleading
   6. Youth
   7. Music
   8. Visitor Feedback Card
   9. Name tag sheet
   10. DVD overview of the church
   11. Time-Sensitive Notifications

   - Modular Information Kit
   - Assemble Set of Cards Customized for a Person
   - The Information Desk or the Visitor Ambassadors would be able to build a stack of these cards that are tailored to the visitors and their life stage and interests in the church.
   - Card sets would be of a uniform size, shape and design so as to fit into a case specific to the cards.

   - Present Set to the Person
   - This Information Kit would be given to the visitor by their Ambassador, or could be built for a visitor by the information booth team as needed.

2. **Match making**
   - Information is collected through a variety of methods for interested visitors and new members.
   - The newer people are then matched with an experienced person in the community that may have a similar background or interests.
   - The mentor would help guide and connect the newer person to the different opportunities available.
   - The matched people would decide on what projects to work on and would build a connection through joint service.

3. **Full Circle**
   - By forming these relationships and performing service inside and outside the church the newer person becomes an experienced member.
   - They are then ready to begin to mentor others and help build additional connections as they do so.

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1. **Getting In**
   - The parking lot signage would be upgraded so that a visitor knows that there are specific parking spaces reserved for Visitors.
   - Reserved spots would have signs that are visible from many feet away.

2. **Getting Around**
   - Once in the building, the signage needs to be configured so that major areas are designated as districts in the building for easier identification.
   - Sanctuary
   - Children
   - Youth
   - Cafe
   - Community Life Center
   - Small Group Rooms
   - Hope Chest
   - Signage to these major areas should be visible above the crowds and not on the walls where they can not be seen until you are right on them.

3. **Finding Where to Go**
   - A visitor-centric map should be produced that displays the major areas and their locations in the building.
   - Elements to include:
     1. Entrances/Exits
     2. Restrooms
     3. Information Desks
Experience Prototype

We wondered how design might help visitors feel comfortable with a Church belief system while also encouraging personal connections and engagement.

This video explores the conceptual design of the Visitor Ambassador an enhanced service of the church that helps visitors make instant connections to the church through a personal guide who can answer any questions.

The service consists of virtual and physical interactions with a representative of the church who may then deliver communication and navigation tools to the visitor.
Conclusion

Be real, be respectful of your constituent’s time and passion, and always be looking for ways to support the creation of personal connections.