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Working Together to Grow the Kingdom

LEADERSHIP NETWORK®

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## How This Garden Does Grow

THINKING  
CREATIVELY TO  
SPREAD  
GOD'S WORD

### FEATURED CHURCH:

The Garden

**LOCATION:** Beef & Boards Dinner Theatre in

Indianapolis, Indiana; The

Mansion at Oak Hill in Carmel, Indiana

**ESTABLISHED:** The Garden at Beef & Boards in 1995; The Garden at Oak Hill in 2002

**SERVICES:** 4 weekly services in two locations

**AVERAGE ATTENDANCE:** 500 at Beef & Boards; 200 at Oak Hill

**S**t. Luke's United Methodist Church in Indianapolis is a strong church with a great reputation. But this active church doesn't rest on its laurels. The leadership challenges itself to think of ways the church can reach more people.

Ten years ago, one of St. Luke's pastors, Dr. Linda McCoy, says God spoke to her in a dream. It was time to do something different.

Following God's call, Dr. McCoy presented St. Luke's with the idea of planting a new church that could meet the needs of those who hadn't found a place in a traditional church. The leadership was supportive and encouraged her to cultivate the seeds of this new "garden."

### THE PLANTERS

That planting is now known as The Garden, a blossom of St. Luke's United Methodist Church. And

although The Garden is thriving today, Dr. McCoy didn't originally have a place to plant it.

Through God's direction and timing, a church member offered his dinner theater, Beef & Boards, as



*The Garden takes advantage of its dinner theater setting and uses the stage to engage the congregation.*

home for The Garden. This working theater hosts The Garden's three Sunday services.

Unbelievably, the theater opens to the public just 45 minutes after The Garden's last service. Church members help the theater's staff get ready for the crowds. Volunteers vacuum, pack up supplies and even help set the tables and fill the water glasses!

### THE GARDENERS

The Garden's leadership team is committed to providing a place for people who have not yet found a church home—many whom didn't feel comfortable in traditional church settings. To meet these needs, The Garden's message is based on the unconditional

love of God. The church's very contemporary services provide a "different packaging" of theology, says Dr. McCoy.

Technology helps the church promote God's Word. As might be expected, worshippers will see song lyrics on big screens. But The Garden also uses movie clips to illustrate sermons and creates original video as modern-day parables.

## 'TWO THIRDS OF OUR FOLKS HAVE HAD LITTLE OR NO CHURCH EXPERIENCE PRIOR TO THE GARDEN.'

"Two thirds of our folks have had little or no church experience prior to The Garden," Dr. McCoy reports. "A significant amount of the other third were turned off or tuned out by traditional churches."

### A STRONG BOND

Even though The Garden doesn't follow a traditional church liturgy or sing songs out of a hymnal, it does keep close ties with the more traditional St. Luke's UMC.

## WHAT LEADERSHIP NETWORK MEANS TO ME

I have a great deal of respect and admiration for Leadership Network. It really is a progressive body. They can pull people together who are different but motivated by similar things. Leadership Network has pushed us to think about things in new ways. They've held us accountable.

Leadership Network has enabled us to step back and take a new look at what is going on in our church. They provide a wonderful resource of people with timely and inspiring messages. Their greatest benefit is how they bridge the gap between the church world and secular world to provide leaders who can positively shape what the church is doing.

—Dr. Linda McCoy, Lead Pastor, The Garden



## OPEN ARMS

*The Garden directs a lot of its efforts to supporting community members working to improve themselves with God's help. The church is especially supportive of people recovering from addictions.*

*One particular church member who is recovering from substance abuse demonstrates how a non-traditional church can reach people. This man now calls The Garden his "spiritual home." He recently told Dr. McCoy that he feels a connection with God and is coming alive because faith has a new relevancy in his life. He said he can't believe how rich life is now.*

*"He never believed that anything spiritual would have any place in his life," says Dr. McCoy. "He says he can now be a father to his daughter and a productive member of society."*

"We share the heart of who we are," Dr. McCoy says. "We just share it differently."

The pastors meet weekly to talk about the messages they are planning. The entire church is celebrating the "Year of The Garden," as this is The Garden's 10th anniversary. The Garden places articles in St. Luke's bi-monthly magazine and uses St. Luke's Sunday bulletin insert so members can take advantage of all the church's offerings, such as small groups.

"We really complement one another very well," Dr. McCoy says. "We work hard to grow together."

This supportive partnership continues to produce results. A second "blossom" site (The Garden at Oak Hill) was started two and a half years ago at a local banquet hall, also owned by a church member. The two Garden locations



*Dr. McCoy's sermons are also heard here at Oak Hill, a second "blossom" site.*

share resources—including Dr. McCoy's weekly sermon—through a live T1 connection.

These sister churches provide a daily, living example of how God values all of His people, regardless of their differences and how they choose to serve Him. **LN**