

Feb. 25 Town Hall Meeting

Members present: Ron Zuker, Mary & Steve Hubbell, Brad & Laura Dean, Robin Thomas, Brad Hilleary, Mark & Annette Erbes, Madonna Borgerding, Jeanne Funnell, Donna Broersma, Gail Anderson, Julie Fuller, Dirk Fuller, Jim & Karen Post, Karen Booth, Mary & Larry Swisher, Bill Barton, Roger Howard, Sheryl Thompson, Dave & Julie McLouth, Bill & Kitty Gietzen, Julie Brott, Mark Rousell, Barb Gripton, Nanci Johnson, Gary Cooper, Glenn & Dena Chilson, Fred & Diane Miller, Jerry Scott, Jimmy Epplert, Allison Keessen, Mark & Sue Graves, Chris Beaudoin, Jerome and Dolores Novotny, Vicki Zuker

Jim Post and Gary Cooper welcomed the participants. Jim opened the meeting in prayer.

Here is a VERY brief history of what has occurred so far:

- Laity and pastoral training: Read eight books. Attended eight training sessions.
- “Mystery Visitor” reports
- Church Self-Study information put together by staff and lay leadership
- Staff and Lay leadership interviews during the Consultation Weekend
- Administrative Council meeting during the Consultation Weekend
- Presentation of findings after worship on Sunday, February 2, 2014
- Our lead consultant was Naomi Garcia
- Naomi Garcia will be assigned to us as our coach if we voted “yes” on the prescriptions

This report has some good news and some more good news. The report points out five strengths, i.e. things we are doing right. See the Consultation Report for more details.

1. Pastoral skills
2. Leaders
3. Worship planning and schedule
4. VCI Team
5. Church family

There is more good news. There are five concerns that they pointed out. No one and no church is doing everything right. So we would hope that they would find things to do differently to better reach our mission.

With these concerns, they provided five prescriptions to address the concerns. So these areas are fixable. Note that these prescriptions are general in nature. We do not have specific details for each prescription yet. Each prescription will require our coach, Naomi Garcia, and an appropriate team of people to determine the details if the report is accepted by the congregation.

There is more good news. If we decide to accept this report and implement the prescriptions we will get a professional to help us. Our coach is an expert at helping nonprofit organizations implement these kinds of changes and build systems to be more effective. Our coach will work with us for up to the next eighteen months to make these changes and ensure they are done correctly.

It is exciting that we are going to learn how to reach others in the name of Jesus Christ. It is also a little scary. We are being asked to simply TRUST right now as the details are worked out.

We have a “parking lot” for unanswered questions. We will find out the answers ASAP and get back to the congregation.

This process is about courage and a leap of faith, not a study of faith. We know that when we show faith to where God is leading us, God is faithful in going ahead of and beside us.

Consider these words from Joshua 3:10-12:

This is how you will know that the living God is among you and that he will certainly drive out before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites, and Jebusites.

See, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you. Now then, choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. And as soon as the priests who carry the ark of the LORD--the Lord of all the earth---set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap.

Note that the Israelites had to make the first move and that God was there with them as they crossed into the Promised Land.

Consider also these words from Psalm 37:3-7:

Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.

This is timely instruction for us. We are called to trust God, commit our hearts and ways to the LORD, and wait patiently for God to act.

The core purpose of these Town Hall Meetings for each and every one of us is to understand the concerns and the related prescriptions in order to cast an informed vote on the prescriptions at the called church conference on Sunday, March 16 at 10:15 am. Our objectives are to:

- Understand each concern,
- Recognize how each concern is hindering us from fully reaching out to our mission field,
- Understand the generalities of the associated prescription and
- Understand how implementing the prescriptions will address the related concern.

This is the first of three Town Hall Meetings. This is the time for questions and comments. Members can come to all three meetings as desired. The remaining two meetings are on Tuesday, February 25 at 7:00 pm and Sunday, March 2 at 3:00 pm.

Concern 1: LACK OF STAFF AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT Prescription 1 Questions and Comments

1. **Question:** How will the new pastor be involved in the staff and leadership development process? How flexible are dates? **Pastor Mark's answer:** Our coach, Naomi Garcia has advised us that our dates are very flexible. Also, all churches have this service prescribed under 1A; it will be led by Naomi.
2. **Comments:** A) The service is a great idea. B) Our #1 strength, our pastor, should not be listed as our #1 concern.
3. **Question:** Will we know how the dates will be modified before the vote is taken? **Answer:** We do not yet have that answer. Pastor Mark will ask Naomi.
4. **Comment from Staff Parish Relations:** The consultation report timeline will need to be flexible so the new pastor can be part of the process.
5. **Comment from Mark Erbes:** Currently, staff meeting include the three of us who are employed for 15 hours or more, i.e. Mark, Jimmy, and Myke. It will be expanded to include the whole staff. The visioning day will be put off until the new pastor can participate.

6. **Question:** What is our current policy on background checks in the nursery? **Answer:** The background check was done at the time of hire. The difference is that now we will perform the checks bi-annually and will include anyone who works with children, including Sunday School teachers and youth leaders.
7. **Question:** Who does the background checks? **Answer:** Myke does it online. All that is required is a name and birthday. It is very simple.
8. **Question:** In regard to the child protection policy, will that include VBS? That is a lot of people. **Answer:** Yes, that will include everyone 18 years and older. We cannot legally perform background checks on minors. **Related comment:** More than one person identified situations where a minor was the abuser. **Answer:** Safety is a matter of having a policy in place that two adults will always be there. That is conference policy. We follow that policy.
9. **Question:** Will Staff Parish Relations Committee liaisons receive training? What does "status of their ministry" mean? **SPRC's response:** Right now we are already meeting monthly between staff and liaison. Liaisons ask how things are going right now. It has worked well on solving issues quickly.
10. **Questions:** If there is already a process in place for connecting an SPRC member with staff, why is there a prescription for it? **Answer:** It may have come out in a staff interview that it has been missed occasionally.
11. **Comment from Jimmy Epplert:** As a staff member, I cannot think of a month when someone has not checked in with me.

Concern 2: LACK OF EXTRAVAGANT GENEROSITY

Prescription 2 Comments and Questions:

1. **Comment:** It is scary that the top twenty givers out of 177 giving units give half the budget is scary. That makes us financially vulnerable. When the big givers die, we will be out that money. That is way too few.
2. **Comment/question:** With respect to the financial issue, the majority of Early Service attendees are retired and on a fixed income. There is only so much you can ask of folks in this situation. How can we attract more people who are in their prime earning years?
3. **Comment:** Hopefully, if we follow these prescriptions we will be growing in numbers and reaching more people. We all have ideas on what we can give up to give more. The sad fact is that many people are not financially committed. God gives us one hundred percent of what we have, but only asks us to give back ten percent.
4. **Comment:** In regards to the congregational study on extravagant generosity, having some data would help people understand what we could do if we tithed. Right now we do not know how much we could give. There needs to be a head/heart connection.
5. **Comment from Mark Erbes:** United Methodists and other mainline denominations typically give 2-3% of their income.
6. **Comment:** Giving is a spiritual issue. We need to depend on God and give thanks to Him.
7. **Comment/question:** It is tough giving money, but you have to be moved to give. How many units of the 177 are giving nothing? It might eye opening to know.
8. **Comment:** A friend at work shared how she tithes and that the tithe is the lower limit of giving, not the upper limit. They also ask for our offerings, i.e. being generous with time, talents, etc.
9. **Comment:** Many of us give to other groups too as part of our tithe. Ten percent it is where you start. It has made a difference in our family's lives.

Concern 3: ABSENCE OF INTENTIONAL FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Prescription 3 Comments and Questions:

1. **Comment from Brad Dean:** We are going to be talking about the teams mentioned in the plan. If you have any interest in being on a team, let Pastor Mark know. The teams are:
 - a. Worship Evaluation (Early Service)
 - b. Celebration Assessment
 - c. Pathways to Discipleship
 - d. Facility Upgrade
 - e. First Impressions

Additional information about these teams can be found in the Consultation Report.

2. **Comment from Mark Erbes:** Lots of printed resources are available for the Pathway Team. We already have some of the steps in place. It is about being more intentional at every step, i.e. with children and youth, new members, and long-time believers.
3. **Comment:** Time and talents are important. It is important that we get the right people into the right committees based on our talents. That is why the spiritual gifts inventory is so important. Goal setting is an important part of every process. We need to make sure that we set goals that have measurable outcomes.

Concern 4: LACK OF RADICAL HOSPITALITY

Prescription 4 Comments and Questions:

1. **Comment:** I do not see a problem with the way the nursery and choir room are configured now. The choir is only in there for 15 minutes. The amount of work it requires would be great. We should probably look at a total space issue. The HVAC would need to be completely redone.
2. **Comment:** The bell choir and kids are often in that area at the same time. If the HVAC needs to be redone, I would be glad to help.
3. **Comment:** This is a larger space issue, but we have the flexibility to solve our problem.
4. **Question:** Does the nursery have to stay where it is now? Could consider another location?
Answer: The nice thing about the plan is its flexibility. We can decide how to do those things.
5. **Comment:** Lack of funds does not mean we cannot dream big. Let's dream big.
6. **Comment from SPRC:** Our committee is already taking care of the page 27 nursery question.
7. **Comment:** Ron Zuker is a great lay leader to implement the plan.
8. **Comment:** We have already started to address many of the items listed under this prescription. For example, the website has been changed.
9. **Comments:** This particular prescription includes many things that I have wanted to see happen. I hope everyone can spend one Sunday taking on one of these jobs, making Lake Harbor a more welcoming place. We will be vital if we all participate.
10. **Comment:** I like the welcome center where it is now. Welcoming all is very important to us. We have to make an effort to welcome everyone.
11. **Question:** Will we be trained in how to greet? **Answer:** Yes. Maybe we can do it Sunday morning in worship.
12. **Comments regarding Celebration Service seating:** A) We have already started to address this by changing the layout to add 20-30 seats. It may mean using the current space better. B) The chairs are hard and uncomfortable. C) When the sanctuary was built, we had a debate between pews and flexible seating. Maybe we need to look at this again. Also consider the old sanctuary. D) 150-200 could sit in the sanctuary. E) We started the Celebration Service in the main space, but I have grown to love having the service in this space because of the intimacy and sense of corporate worship. This space changed my mind. It works for me. F) The idea of keeping the Celebration Service in the back is good as it fits the service. Maybe take out some of the back pews to create more space. G) Good idea.

13. **Comment:** Continue to think about new people coming in---the 80% rule, i.e. a space appears full if 80% of the seats are taken. Always have enough chairs so the people feel like there is space for them.
14. **Comments regarding the old sanctuary:** A) We used to all have to move at the same time because of space issues. That is what led to this sanctuary...no place to park or sit. B) It took a long time for this new space to become home. Think about using the sanctuary again.

Concern 5: LACK OF PASSIONATE WORSHIP
Prescription 5 Comments and Questions

1. **Comments regarding the Mystery Guest Report:** A) It is clear that it is good that we have two different services. B) Demographically, we had people coming to services that were not a good fit. Worship evaluation is subjective and is highly dependent on people's backgrounds. A good part of this prescription is the free worship workshop. C) "No one bored or engaged": I struggle with this. When musicians do a nice job, there is no response. The directive to be quiet was too bad.
2. **Questions:** Is there a list of churches that have been identified as the best ones to visit? **Answer:** No. It is up to us to decide. They do not have to be Methodist. **Related responses:** Find one with a full parking lot. One with an empty parking lot tells you what not to do.
3. **Comment regarding seating:** A) People tend to sit on the periphery, so as more people to come in there are not any spots. Leave spaces at the edges for late comers. B) When we redesigned the Celebration Space, we said the tucked away space would be for the regulars to leave space for visitors. Also think about parking spaces that we leave for other people. C) Seating concerns need to be part of the training for Radical Hospitality.
4. **Question:** With the adjustment of the dates, will they give us more than 18 months of help? **Answer:** We need to ask Naomi, but probably yes.
5. **Question:** Will the preaching continuing education prescription apply to the new pastor? **Mark's answer:** Probably not. **Related response:** Shouldn't it?
6. **Comment/question:** I like the way Mark preaches. In regards to the worship evaluation, I enjoyed when the praise band was at the early service. Could we have more blended music at the early service? **Answer:** The Early Service is blended, especially Mary and Jerry's music, but we can look at this more.

Jim reminded everyone that we vote on March 16 at 10:45 am. We hope and pray that the VCI initiative will not be derailed due to Mark's move. This plan in our plan, not Mark's plan. It is amazing how fast we have already moved. Some changes have been easy; some are harder. Even though we may be feeling down due to Mark's transfer, we hope we can move forward.

Note that the VCI Team's response to question six on the Frequently Asked Questions handout has change somewhat in light of Pastor Mark's appointment to Holt UMC.

Q6: What does our pastor and leadership team think of it?

A6: Pastor Mark and the remaining nine members of the leadership team are in **unanimous support** of the prescriptions. These are all things we need to do whether they are accepted or not. We have already begun work in several areas and are confident that we can move forward to complete all of them. **Particularly in light of the upcoming pastoral change, it would be foolish to miss this opportunity to have free Conference support (see question 4). Naomi Garcia has also indicated that some of the deadlines will be adjusted so that our new pastor will have the opportunity for necessary participation in the process.**

Jim Post and Gary Cooper thanked everyone for coming. Mark closed the meeting in prayer.