

## March 2 Town Hall Meeting

**Members present:** Ron & Vicki Zuker, Mary & Steve Hubbell, Glenn Chilson, Karen & Jim Post, Karen Booth, Gary Cooper, Mark & Annette Erbes, Julie Fuller, Jim & Doris Elrod, Dwayne Brott, Shasta Osborn-Jaehnig, Ray Post, Michael Boersma, Jake Burmeister, John Decker, Jean Burmeister, Dirk Fuller, Gayle Decker, Dolores & Jerome Novotny, Phyllis Spengler, Karen Grace, Jenn Miles, Patrick Miles, Brad Dean, Betty Kinney, Roger Knopf, Laura Dean, Renee Gordon, James Day, Diane Thompson

Vicki Zuker and Gary Cooper welcomed the participants. Brad Dean 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 last of three Town Hall Meetings. This is the time for questions and comments.

### **Concern 1: LACK OF STAFF AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Prescription 1 Questions and Comments**

1. **Comment:** Background checks described in prescription 1B1 are for everyone 18 and older for everyone who works with kids and youth.
2. **Comment from Mark Erbes:** We have liaisons that meet with staff now. This prescription is about being more intentional. Staff meetings would be expanded to include all paid staff. We now only require staff paid 15 or more hours a week to attend.

### **Concern 2: LACK OF EXTRAVAGANT GENEROSITY**

#### **Prescription 2 Comments and Questions:**

1. **Comment s:** The scary fact is that we have few people doing most of the giving. The \$1 a day cards (aka as the orange card) are a sign that we all need to dig deeper. Think of this as a spiritual discipline. Giving is a subject no one wants to talk about. One hundred percent of what we have comes from God. We are only asked to return a portion to Him.
2. **Question:** After the vote is done, could we bring the orange cards back out? **Answer:** The orange cards are still out. We will be sure that we continue to mention them during Sunday announcements.

3. **Related comments:** 1) In regards to all the prescriptions, when it comes to vote, consider what we are voting for. In voting, we should be taking individual ownership in this process, not just for what the church should do. 2) The Consultation Report does not belong to the pastor; it is our plan.
4. **Comment:** Maybe we need to bring the steps of giving information before the congregation now. **Response:** This could be part of the self-study. This was brought up at the last Town Hall Meeting too.

### **Concern 3: ABSENCE OF INTENTIONAL FAITH DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Prescription 3 Comments and Questions:**

1. **Comment:** Each prescription has teams associated with it. The teams, which are explained in more detail in the report, are Worship Evaluation (Early Service), Celebration Assessment, Pathways to Discipleship, Facility Upgrade, and First Impressions. Let Pastor Mark know if you would like to be on a team.
2. **Update from Mark Erbes:** We cannot revise the dates until after the vote. The few prescriptions where the pastor is heavily involved will need to be adjusted.
3. **Question:** Who are you looking for on the Pathway Team? **Answer:** This is a curriculum development team, beginning with new members and finding a place for people at every point in the journey. We need a variety of people on this team.
4. **Comment:** I am confused about the process (intentional faith development). I need an example. **Related response:** 1) This morning I described what we are doing with the kids for Lent. One adult said that she does not understand Lent and has been looking for more information about it. There would be a place for her to learn about it. 2) The Path to Discipleship is an intentional attempt to help people grow in faith outside of Sunday morning worship. Typically this takes place in small groups. Our small group ministry needs to be expanded.
5. **Comment from Brad Dean:** I was part of a new church start-up Kalamazoo and saw the importance of aligning gifts, passions, and ways to serve. I have seen it work.
6. **Comment from Mark Erbes:** The Lay Leadership Committee exists, but it would be helpful to know where to put people based on a spiritual gifts inventory. We do this with new members, not established members. Gifts can change with time too.
7. **Comment:** The more involved we are, the more our faith grows. This is my hope for everyone.

### **Concern 4: LACK OF RADICAL HOSPITALITY**

#### **Prescription 4 Comments and Questions:**

1. **Questions:** How extensive is the prescribed facilities upgrade? What are the financial implications? **Answer:** We get to decide how to take care of these issues. There will be some expenses, but we have some choice.
2. **Comment:** From the Mystery Guest Report, I can see that some of the visitors came before the new outdoor sign. **Response:** That is true, but the prescription in 4A2 points out that interior signage is lacking too.
3. **Comment:** Signage and space in nursery are the only two specifics addressed by the prescriptions. At the last meeting, someone suggested we look at space utilization as a whole to make the best use of it.
4. **Comment:** Our Lay Leader, Ron Zuker, is well qualified to develop a plan and train the congregation in radical hospitality.
5. **Comment:** I notice that that one Mystery Guest mentioned kids moving around during the service.
6. **Comments/question:** In my Friday night consultation weekend focus group there was great concern about the separation between the two services. It is still a strong feeling. It was cool to see

everyone in one service for the reading of the prescriptions. I liked the blended feel of the service. Will there be discussion of having one combined service, maybe once a month? **Answer:** For three years we have been having combined worship services on Fifth Sundays which happens about four times a year. Diverse worship was identified as one of our strengths. Our worship teams work very well together while planning two services.

7. **Comment:** The Celebration Service needs to be in a more obvious space.
8. **Comments:** When we have a Combined Service, it means that visitors coming at 11:30 am come when no one is here. Please join the Celebration Service occasionally to see who is there.
9. **Comment:** I have attended many churches. At one church, all kids have been invited to the front of the church to participate. I loved it.
10. **Comment:** I find it disheartening to think that kids might be considered a distraction. We need to think about including them from the time that they are very little.

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

1. **Comment:** I am excited about getting a worship workshop out of the deal.
2. **Comment:** If you have not been able to read the Mystery Guest Report, I would recommend that you do so. It points out the strength in having two services. **Related responses:** 1) There are two hard copies. You may sign them out from the office. It is also posted online. 2) The report is long, but is broken down by category, so you can read just part of it.
3. **Related comments:** 1) Diving into worship is awesome. It is my passion (Michael Boersma). How do we worship? God has given us specific directions in the Bible about passionate worship, e.g. David danced like a fool, people fell on their feet, etc. 2) Methodists have a tendency to “sit on our hands.” We have held back on clapping or another response. Why not show when we are moved? Maybe our guests don’t see our passion that we may have felt but not shown. 3) This morning, as we were singing the Doxology, I noticed our lack of joy. We need to put our hearts into it. Make a joyful noise.
4. **Related comments:** 1) When I first read the report, I felt very angry and somewhat defensive. In the past, we have put things on the back burner because we get defensive when we are criticized. We have to look at the report with an open mind. We have to find a way to serve many people. Look for what is best for the whole congregation and gets us growing. 2) I also had the same initial anger. I realize that we are already doing many of these things and are on the right path. It is just raising the bar. We owe it to God to do that. 3) One thing that I learned from our VCI reading is that growing churches are outwardly focused. Being defensive is about us. Making disciples is about looking outward.
5. **Question:** We know that we have a new pastor coming in July. How does this affect the prescription for continuing pastoral education? **Answer from Mark Erbes:** Pastors are always looking for continuing education. This could be a prescription for the new pastor and s/he may welcome the opportunity.
6. **Comment:** This prescription points to our lack of Extravagant Generosity. Things that are important, like continuing education for our staff, require that we are generous enough to have that money in our budget. We should have been paying for continuing education all along.
7. **Comment:** We need to get more people involved and in the right areas.

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)**

Please read the six FAQ found in a separate document. Take particular note of question six:

Question 6: What does our pastor and leadership team think of it?

Answer 6: 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. 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.

#### **CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

1. **Comment:** You must be present and a member to vote on Sunday, March 16 at 10:45 am. The bishop has already ruled on this.
2. **Question:** What does it take to pass? **Answer:** A simple majority.
3. **Comment:** Instead of looking out a window, look in a mirror. We must be accountable.
4. **Comment from Mark Erbes:** We are doing great filling out the teams. I appreciate that.
5. **Comment:** I think we are all going to want to do these recommendations. If we say, yes, we get free coaching. We would push to do them anyway if we get a no.
6. **Comment:** We need to be very clear that there is no connection between the VCI process and Mark leaving.
7. **Comment:** The groups that have shown up at the Town Hall Meetings are a good representation of the congregation as a whole. That shows that there is a broad group that cares.
8. **Comment:** There is definitely much we can improve on and that is a good thing.

Vicki Zuker and Brad Dean thanked everyone for coming. Mark Erbes closed the meeting in prayer.