

Notes from the Visioning Café
March 22, 2015
Cedar Works

Attendance: 41 plus Jenifer Erikson Morales from Franconia Conference who facilitated the discussion

After getting our food and drink, we sat at tables of 4-6 according to our interest of one of the 3 focus areas: Faith Formation, Youth & Children, or Outreach/Community Involvement

Lorie explored the question of how we got here. Stating some things from our 2010 and 2013 congregational reviews, the energy and growth that is happening in the congregation, and then defining the 3 focus areas. (*see addendum 1*)

Jenifer then gave an introduction to the process, read a quote for us to ponder, and lead us in prayer.

Based on the focus area of the table, each table took time to answer the question ó

What do you hope for in the next 2-3 years in the area of...either Faith Formation, or Youth & Children, or Outreach/Community Involvement?

Then tables choose their top 3 hopes and these were written on big sheets of paper.

Based on the 3 hopes that were chosen, each table group discussed ó

What could we do in the next year to move toward these hopes?

Ideas were written down at the tables.

At the break, each person used stickers to choose their top 3 priorities from the hopes that were written on the big sheets of paper within their focus area.

After the break we joined in larger circles based on the 3 focus areas, named above. Ken, Tim, and Bryan facilitated. The stickers were counted for each sheet of paper, and the top 3 hopes of each focus area were named. Each group focused their attention on these top 3 hopes/priorities brainstorming around these two questions:

Based on the conversation you had at table groups for Question 2,

What are things that are needed to accomplish these priorities?

What kind of leadership (volunteer or paid) is needed?

(See Addendum 2)

We then gathered back together as a whole group, and each facilitator reported their groups brainstorming and discussion. There was some time for questions and further comments or reflections. Church Council will follow up with any next steps including time for reflection and more conversation. We closed the time in prayer.

~ reported by Lorie Hershey

Addendum 1

Congregational Growth Indicators

1. New people coming and getting involved; numbers on Sunday morning steady and increasing a bit.

	AVERAGE Worship Attendance		
	Adults	Children	Total
2010	61	26	87
2011	60	22	83
2012	62	24	87
2013	62	22	84
2014	69	22	92

2. Growth happening in other ways: we are active with outside groups like POWER, Kingdom Builders, gardening group, MCC Festival. New small groups forming i.e. Bible Study began, new attenders small group. Tapping into the gifts of our instrumentalists on more regular basis for worship; choir.
3. Youth group has grown significantly and will likely remain there for a few years. Currently have 19 youth (combined Sr high and Jr high). Based on current children in the congregation:
For the 2015-16 school year 18 youth
2016-17 21 youth
2017-18 20 youth
2018-19 22 youth

These are all factors of a growing congregation whether in numbers or more involvement within the congregation and outside of the congregation.

From WPMF's 2010 Congregational Review:

- We hope we find ways to support parents with young children, nurture marriages, and meet the needs of those who are older in our midst.
- We want to have more youth in the church i.e. more kids involved with music i.e. greater focus on children's issues such as child protection and parenting.
- We dream of WPMF having a permanent and/or obvious outreach presence in our neighborhood i.e. with the issue of pacifism, perhaps an after-school program, a food pantry, or partnering with other local churches and other community organizations who are already active in the community. We dream of being a church that is willing to be changed by engaging in congregational outreach, has people who are willing and able to invest the energy needed, and willing/able to fund our endeavors.
- We dream of having an open dialogue about building options i.e. whether to remain where we are and work on improving it or look into our own building; i.e. We see this as connected with the possibility of congregational growth; i.e. We also see that building issues impact being capable of having programs and doing outreach.

2011 we joined POWER

2012 we engaged in a discernment process around membership and sexual orientation. Decided sexual orientation does not have a bearing on membership in our congregation and so became a publically welcoming/affirming congregation for LGBTQ community.

From WPMF's 2013 Congregational Review

- a desire for a nicer, and particularly more senior-friendly, worship space.
 - í wheelchair access and a main floor bathroom.,
- concern for our small group system. Many preferred how in the past small groups were more focused in purpose and temporary, changing every year or so. A few saw a revamped small group structure as a way to maintain the atmosphere of our congregation should we become larger and more diverse at Sunday worship. A handful of respondents wished for specific small groups (a Bible study group, a group for praying for the congregation, a group for doing service projects, a group on God as mystery versus God as friend).
- a desire to increase our diversity and our outreach to those who live in the neighborhood.
- many voiced a concern that we don't emphasize baptism enough, both to new members and to the youth of the congregation.

In these reviews and conversations at Elders and Church Council, leadership saw some patterns emerge. So three general areas were named to help focus the discussion at the Visioning Cafe, understanding that they also have cross-over with one another:

- **Faith formation of the congregation:** meaning how we support a growing connection with God, one another and ourselves. Based on the call to love God, and love your neighbor as yourself. This can be through worship, small groups, individual practices, etc. How are we making space for our faith to be nurtured at any age, and for connection and love to be fostered? Conversation around small groups included here.
- **Outreach/Community Involvement:** How do we want to be in our neighborhood? What do we feel called to in our outreach and interactions with those around us? The conversation around building and physical space is included here because of the way it could impact our dreams for being a presence in the neighborhood.
- **Youth and Children Ministry:** Has overlaps with faith formation. How are we nurturing a space for our children and youth to grow in their walk with God, Christ-like values, and leadership? What can we learn from them? Conversation around supporting parents included here.

Addendum 2

Visioning at The Cedar Works

- Hopes for next three years, number next to these is amount of people who chose it as a priority, some of these hopes are grouped together because of their similarities.
- What are things that are needed to accomplish these priorities?

Youth & Children's Ministry

Hopes for next three years

- Help Children get excited about faith, more youth make a public faith commitment to follow Jesus. Children and Youth understand and choose Mennonite faith (identity) **11**
 - Junior Youth curriculum change - more challenging biblical context.
 - Introduce Bible history
 - Mennonite history/exploring membership in youth
 - give children rites of passage/statements of faith - provide responsibilities for young members
 - clarify expectations for Communion
- Develop strong connections b/w children and adults (not parents) **11**
 - Empower and enlarge adults in children/youth programs
 - SS partnerships/workshops for adults - Adults sometimes hesitant to get involved - Facilitate learning to teach Mentoring program (fall 2015 plan)
- Give parents tools to nurture faith in children **6**
Children feel valued and a part of WPMF **6**
Youth prioritize Church community **2**

Next steps for Youth & Children's Ministry

- Mentorship possibly started by congregational volunteers - might need staff to coordinate mentors, SS helpers, curriculum, etc.

Outreach/ Community Involvement

Hopes for next three years

- Deliberate thought towards engaging diverse communities (our surrounding community) **8**
Continue to work at diversifying our congregation **8**
 - Setting up an interaction/shared conversations w/ partner congregations (sister congregations)
 - Invite more neighbors and people who live around us (non-Mennonites)
 - Dollar Stroll
 - Knowing who is in our neighborhood (social class, age, ethnicity, languages, sexual orientation)
 - Engaging people in our/new building

- **Social Justice in the city and Beyond 7**
Address social/educational need in community through programming in a new building owned by WPMF 7
 - Building on connections w/ POWER - Hope for justice
 - Establishing connection w/ a local school ex. music program (POWER priority)
 - Open/available space during the week for youth/families
 - Risk/energy level involved in owning, maintaining a space
- Be a congregation accessible to people in need (emotional/spiritual/etc) (Sunday and mid week) **11**
 - Special needs (ex. victims of crime, social service needs)
 - Safe place
 - Talk to new people
- Help churches that already run food pantries/ or broader - Engage surrounding community groups (ie. local schools, community organization) **5**
- Talk with existing community leaders re: community needs **4**
- Youth events that are open to youth's friends/ the outside church community **2**
- Plant a Spanish speaking church **3**

Next steps - 3 Priorities for community development and outreach

- Possibility of hiring an outreach minister
- What is the purpose/hope of program/ new space
- Talk/research w/ people in our congregation already involved in social ministry
- Community study - w. philly/southwest to gain info from individual schools and organizations
- Set up conversations w/ partner congregations - closest POWER congregation
- Training for us to be more accessible- find/connect with community resources
- Develop small teams to collect info/ build relationship with partners.

Faith Formation

Hopes for next three years

- Space to foster personal faith and wholeness/more opportunities for a variety of faith formation **7** Opportunities to recognize and name Faith formation already happening **4**
Name and Listen to breath of spirituality in congregation **9**
 - There's lots of literature available - James Fowler
 - Have Worship series on this
 - Create space for adults to talk about their own experience with baptism

- Contacting young adults from the past about their experience at WPMF
- Have an exploring membership class specifically for youth
- Have people share their faith journey in worship
- Plan "activities: that incorporate and grow our faith
- Could have multiple options for adult S.S.
- Small Groups **3** Intergenerational Community Building/Integrated Children and Youth program **8**
 - Involve Youth in Worship
 - Peer mentoring program (Adults keep others accountable and foster faith)
- Continued Conversation around sexuality **6**
 - OWL curriculum

Next steps for Faith Formation

- May require "Youth Pastor" to incorporate
- need more volunteers to lead Adult S.S. in order to provide options (could also be combined with "Youth Pastor"
- Current leadership structure could choose to make faith development a priority