

**DISCUSSION PAPER FOR “DESSERT ‘N
DIALOGUE” SESSIONS
PHASE II – SURVEY RESULTS
September 14/16, 2009**

The congregation will have 3 opportunities to discuss the results of the Survey as we discover our “strengths” and “growth areas” together. Reading this paper will help you come prepared to talk about the statements made in the Survey. There will be a half hour of fellowship time at the beginning of each discussion event—the “dessert” part. You are asked to sign up for the event that best suits your time frame. You will be assigned to the first discussion area and get to choose your second discussion area.

1. OBSERVATIONS:

169 people logged on (including the paper copies we inputted), with each age group well represented. There was a significant drop-off of about 40 people logging in and actually giving their opinions. There was also a drop-off of about 20 people between those giving their “personal” opinions and those giving “church” opinions.

The statement most often answered was #3 about the position of Senior Pastor being open to both genders (most disagreeing, though more open to that possibility personally than thinking the church might be); the one answered least often was #36 about our working relationship with area non-CRCs. There was a significant number of 3’s (i.e., neither agreeing nor disagreeing), especially in the “church” opinion column; also many of the written comments were about people not knowing how the church as a whole felt about many of the statements.

The one statement about which we felt most positive, both “personal” and “church,” was #14, that our facilities are adequate for our present ministries; the second strongest in both “personal” and “church” was #9, that we place a high priority on sound, biblical preaching.

People consistently ranked themselves as feeling more negative than the church as a whole, except on gender equality for the senior pastor position, and the need for dedicated youth space. People also consistently ranked themselves as more open to change than they believed the church to be, especially in the areas of worship, member involvement, and understanding the surrounding community. Some 659 comments were made, indicating a high degree of interest in the statement topics.

2. STRENGTHS: (identified as statements having higher highs than lows)

The facilities are adequate in meeting our current ministry needs.

We place a high priority on sound, biblical preaching.

We do not, either personally or as church, believe the church is open to having a senior

pastor of either gender at this time.

We prefer that our pastor focus on shepherding the flock over managing the organization.

There is a good blend of contemporary and traditional worship at present.

God, not us, is the focus of our worship.

The majority of our members are committed to the future of CCRC.

Our church is well located to serve those we are trying to reach.

Generally our members are adequately cared for.

Visitors and new members are generally welcomed and enfolded.

All of our ministries are accountable to someone, ultimately to Council.

3. AMBIVALENCE: (identified as statements in which high and low are about equal)

Decisions are openly discussed by leaders with members.

There is a need for a Worship Coordinator.

There are enough sermons on giving.

Members understand and use their spiritual gifts.

Our ministries meet the needs of all groups.

Members typically support our local Outreach Ministries.

All of our ministries work toward a common goal.

4. GROWTH AREAS: (identified as statements having higher lows than highs)

Our youth could use a dedicated space (personal high; church low).

We do not have an effective stewardship program.

Council could give better leadership in financial giving.

The church needs a better system of recruiting, training, and evaluating volunteers.

Pastors, elders, and deacons could be more effective in pastoral visits (personal high, church low).

Our church does not understand our surrounding community very well.

Our members need to care more about their neighbours' salvation.

Our church could improve its working relationship with area non-CRC churches.

Not all ministries at Covenant have an outreach component (personal high, church low)

Our ministries are not prepared for growth.

5. A SUMMARY OF COMMENTS MADE BY RESPONDENTS THAT HELP INTERPRET THE DATA:

Leadership

We tend to recruit leaders on the basis of willingness to serve rather than spiritual gifts. Our next pastor needs to be male for the sake of unity. The pastor needs to strike a good balance between "leadership training and managing the organization" and "making pastoral visits," though pastoral care can be done by many other people as well. Council members are seen as business execs more than as spiritual leaders (that's not necessarily bad). Council often makes decisions without consulting the membership.

Worship

We believe we have a good balance between “contemporary” and “traditional” worship, though the fact that we even have to distinguish suggests we’re still not God-focussed enough in our worship. What’s our definition of a good “blend?” If we add drama, liturgical dance, etc., it needs to be well done, planned, rehearsed, in good taste; worship is not entertainment. Preaching is generally appreciated, but we need to be more practical. We have enough worship people up front, though quality is more important than quantity. We still want to hear the congregation sing. Does our “blend” in trying to please everyone end up in satisfying no one? The majority feel we don’t need a Worship Coordinator, but we are over-taxing our Worship Leaders; if we have one, we need a new job description.

Facilities

Our greatest unanimity is around the adequacy of our facilities: they meet the needs of our present ministries. Some suggestions were made about improving the nursery, space for youth, outdoor play areas, saving up for big-ticket eventual maintenance. We can not know if we’re in the right area for those we’re trying to reach until we determine who it is we’re trying to reach.

Finances

We must not have a good stewardship program; if we did, people would be faithful in supporting local ministries and we wouldn’t have to keep begging for more. The Council’s recent letter was seen as positive by some, but as received poorly by many members; this form of communicating may not be the most effective. Sermons on giving are too narrowly focussed and do more to annoy people than motivate them to give.

Member Involvement

Many former members have left, and some may still be on the verge of leaving, depending on our future; but most who are still here are committed to this church. Members are more likely to serve in the church’s area of need than in their area of spiritual gifts. Members might serve more willingly if they were involved in making decisions. We do not have a good system of recruiting, training and evaluating volunteers. We’re ambivalent about whether we are or even need to be meeting the needs of all groups in the church.

Mutual Care

Most of our members are adequately cared for, especially if they are in Small Groups or in some other way “in the loop.” If they are lonely or introverted, or otherwise unconnected, they may fall through the cracks.

Pastors, elders, and deacons could be more effective in their pastoral visits. In terms of special needs, we're starting Friendship this Fall, but otherwise their care happens informally. Visitors and new members are welcomed, but probably not well enfolded.

Community Awareness

A few people seem to have some idea of who our "target" is in terms of outreach, but the church as a whole does not. We care about our neighbours' salvation (that goes without saying) but we don't know how to introduce them to Jesus. We support the ministries of Hope Centre Ministries more warmly than Indian Family Centre, though more with our money than with our time and effort. The support for local Outreach ministries like Love Winnipeg and Alpha is very strong from some, but lukewarm or even negative from others; we have our own outreach ministries, e.g., coffee break, GEMS, etc. Our relationship with the other CRCs in Winnipeg is largely inactive; our relationship with Transcona is improving, though we could do much more in terms of youth or combined worship; our relationship with Good News Fellowship is almost non-existent (do they even want this?). Our relationship with area non-CRCs is even less active; the former pastor worked on this, but this could improve too (e.g., Men's Breakfast). Most of our ministries do not have an intentional outreach component.

Infrastructure

Most of our ministries are accountable to someone, eventually to Council, but some operate quite autonomously, and perhaps prefer it that way. Council could probably improve its oversight in some areas. And who is Council accountable to? We are not in a growth mode; more likely a maintenance mode. Do we even want to grow—who would volunteer for all the extra work then? And we don't have a common goal; groups have their own goals. Many individuals serve in the area of their passion and gifts, but they don't feel that their ministry is blessed by the church as a whole. Perhaps our goal should be to build the church of Jesus and serve God.