

A REPORT ON PHASE II OF THE TRANSITION PROCESS Covenant CRC, Winnipeg, Manitoba - September, 2009

God has a plan for us; and we will do His will (Psalm 40:4-8)

There were 8 areas of the church's ministry we investigated during Phase II of the Transition Process:

Leadership	Worship
Facilities	Finances
Membership Involvement	Mutual Care
Community Awareness	Infrastructure

Phase II was divided into 2 stages: A Congregational Survey, and the "Dessert 'N Dialogue" sessions (a discussion forum where members could discuss the survey results). This Final Report has five sections:

- A) Membership Survey including the 40 survey statements
- B) Discussion paper of the Membership Survey prepared by Pastor Peter
- C) Questions asked at the "Dessert 'N Dialogue" sessions
- D) Participants comments at the "Dessert 'N Dialogue sessions
- E) An analysis of our strengths and growth areas by Peter Hogeterp

A. PHASE II: MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

Introduction:

The intent of this survey is to get both your personal views and your perspective on how you think the church feels about the current situation. This is not about how you think things should be in the future but how you think they actually are today. The Transition Team will use your input to discover our church's strengths and growth areas.

Phase two of the Transition Process has two stages. This is stage one of this phase and you will be invited to round table sessions as a follow up to this survey.

Answers to range as follows

1 (personally strongly disagree) 2,3,4, 5(personally strongly agree)

1 (the church strongly disagrees) 2,3,4, 5(the church strongly agrees)

- Leadership:
 - Leaders in this church are recruited based on their gift of leadership.
 - The position of senior pastor in this church is open to both genders.
 - The pastor's main job is to focus on church leadership development and church organizational management. (i.e. CEO of the church).

- The pastor's main job is to focus on visiting members of the church (Shepherd of the church).
 - Council members are the spiritual leaders of CCRC.
 - Important decisions are openly discussed by leaders with the members.
- Worship:
 - The use of alternative styles of worship (e.g. use of drama, liturgical dance, etc.) enhance our worship.
 - A high priority is placed on sound biblical preaching.
 - God, not us, is the focus of our worship.
 - The increased number of people leading in worship is enhancing our worship services.
 - There is a good blend of contemporary and traditional worship.
 - There is a need for a worship coordinator to maintain and develop our worship services.
- Facilities:
 - Our present facilities are adequate for serving the current worship, education and group ministry needs.
 - It is important that our youth have a dedicated and appropriate space for their use.
 - Our church location is excellent for serving those whom our church is trying to reach.
 - Our facilities and equipment require upgrading and improving.
- Finances:
 - Members of the church are generous in their financial support in meeting the budgetary needs of the church.
 - Our church has an effective stewardship program in place.
 - Council is providing good leadership in financial giving.
 - There are enough sermons focused on giving.
- Membership Involvement:
 - The majority of our members are committed to the future of Covenant CRC.
 - Members understand their spiritual gifts and are using them in areas of their strengths.
 - Members are afforded an opportunity to be involved in significant decisions.
 - The church has a good system of recruiting, evaluating and training members in CCRC ministries (volunteer and paid positions).
 - Our ministries meet the needs of all groups (e.g. youth, special needs, seniors, etc).

- Mutual Care:
 - Members are adequately cared for through Small Groups, Stephen Ministry, families, friends, etc.
 - The pastors, elders and deacons are effective in their pastoral visits.
 - The church has an effective care system for special needs.
 - Visitors and new members are effectively welcomed and enfolded into our church.

- Community Awareness:
 - Our church clearly understands its surrounding community and the target population it is trying to reach and serve.
 - Members care for the salvation of our neighbours.
 - Members support Covenant's involvement with local CRC ministries (e.g. Hope Centre Ministries, Indian Family Centre).
 - Members support all other outreach ministries of Covenant CRC (e.g. Love Winnipeg, Alpha, etc.).
 - Our church has a good working relationship with Transcona CRC and Good News Fellowship.
 - Our church has a good working relationship with other non-CRC churches in our neighbourhood.
 - Outreach is integrated into the fabric of our ministries.

- Infrastructure:
 - Our ministries are prepared for growth.
 - All Covenant ministries are accountable to someone/group and report ultimately to Council.
 - All of our ministries work together towards a common goal.

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B. DISCUSSION PAPER FOR “DESSERT ‘N DIALOGUE” SESSIONS September 14/16, 2009

1. OBSERVATIONS:

1. 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.

2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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)

- a) The facilities are adequate in meeting our current ministry needs.
- b) We place a high priority on sound, biblical preaching.
- c) We do not, either personally or as church, believe the church is open to having a senior pastor of either gender at this time.
- d) We prefer that our pastor focus on shepherding the flock over managing the organization.
- e) There is a good blend of contemporary and traditional worship at present.
- f) God, not us, is the focus of our worship.
- g) The majority of our members are committed to the future of CCRC.
- h) Our church is well located to serve those we are trying to reach.
- i) Generally our members are adequately cared for.
- j) Visitors and new members are generally welcomed and enfolded.
- k) All of our ministries are accountable to someone, ultimately to Council.

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

- a) Decisions are openly discussed by leaders with members.
- b) There is a need for a Worship Coordinator.
- c) There are enough sermons on giving.
- d) Members understand and use their spiritual gifts.
- e) Our ministries meet the needs of all groups.
- f) Members typically support our local Outreach Ministries.
- g) All of our ministries work toward a common goal.

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

- a) Our youth could use a dedicated space (personal high; church low).
- b) We do not have an effective stewardship program.
- c) Council could give better leadership in financial giving.
- d) The church needs a better system of recruiting, training, and evaluating volunteers.
- e) Pastors, elders, and deacons could be more effective in pastoral visits (personal high, church low).
- f) Our church does not understand our surrounding community very well.
- g) Our members need to care more about their neighbours' salvation.
- h) Our church could improve its working relationship with area non-CRC churches.
- i) Not all ministries at Covenant have an outreach component (personal high, church low)
- j) Our ministries are not prepared for growth.

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

a) 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.

b) 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 done well, 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 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.

c) 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 cannot know if we're in the right area for those we're trying to reach until we determine whom it is we're trying to reach.

d) 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.

e) 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.

f) 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.

g) 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.

h) 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.

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**C: ISSUES CONSIDERED AT THE
“DESSERT ‘N DIALOGUE”
DISCUSSION GROUPS**

September 14, 10 am, 6:30 pm, or Sept. 16, at 6:30 pm

Leadership:

- a) Is the pastor’s main job to “lead the organization” or “shepherd the people?” Should it be one or the other?
- b) How open is Council to consulting with the congregation before decisions are made? Should they be?

Worship

- a) To what degree are alternative worship styles (e.g., drama, dance) helpful in enhancing worship? For whom?
- b) How important is it to have a worship coordinator in order for us to develop our worship services?

Facilities

- a) We seem to agree that we have excellent facilities. Do they need upgrading and improving (e.g., audio/visual, nursery, etc.)?
- b) Should we have a dedicated space for youth ministries?

Finances

Is our stewardship program effective in helping us learn to grow in the grace of giving?

Membership Involvement

Is there a good system of recruiting, evaluating and training members for both volunteer and paid positions?

Mutual Care

- a) Are pastors, elders and deacons effective in their pastoral visits?
- b) Are visitors and new members effectively welcomed and enfolded into our church?

Community Awareness

Do we understand our surrounding community and the target population God wants us to serve and are we effective in reaching them? Should we be working with other churches?

Infrastructure

Are we working together toward a common goal? Do we know what that goal is? Is every ministry accountable to someone/group to ensure that it is working towards that common goal?

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D: A SUMMARY OF COMMENTS MADE AT THE “DESSERT ‘N DIALOGUE” SESSIONS

The Transition Team invited the members of the church to discuss, face-to-face, the 8 areas of the church’s life that had been on the Survey, highlighting 12 questions as the issues around which we had a significant diversity of opinions. Approximately 140 people gathered at these 3 events, and every comment was carefully noted. This report is a summary of that material and is intended to help us see who we are as God has gifted us and what we have to offer to the future God gives us. In Phase III we will discover God’s direction for Covenant’s future, based on what we have heard from each other. The following summaries will guide the Focus Groups in Phase III.

A. LEADERSHIP

There were two questions in this section: 1) is the pastor’s main job to “lead the congregation” or to “shepherd the flock?” and 2) how open is Council to consulting with the congregation before decisions are made and should the congregation be consulted?

1) Though there is a strong sense that our church’s pastor is to be the Shepherd of the Flock, it is clear at the same time that the church is a complex organization, and as such needs strong leadership. That leadership needs to be a partnership between pastor and Council. Council would take the lead in managing the organization with input from the pastor, and the pastor would take the lead in being the Spiritual Director of the membership with input from Council. This would require a proper balance between the

two. If the pastor is expected to do the main shepherding (understood as visiting), then this congregation is too big for him/her to do it alone. Maybe he/she is to oversee the shepherding that is done by a large group of volunteers (e.g., elders, deacons, associates, Stephen ministers, etc.). The Council needs to be responsive to what they hear from the membership when this dual role is out of balance. It will always be true that the pastor needs to put primary energy into preaching and teaching, and preparing the people for service. A pastor cannot be all things to all people.

2) The Council does a relatively decent (less than excellent) job of involving the congregation in making decisions that impact everyone. It needs to work on creating a good balance of when it needs to show good leadership by making decisions and then informing the people, and when it should consult the membership before it makes a decision. The membership is equally responsible with the Council for making sure the communication loop stays open. It is more important that members know they have been heard than that they have been agreed with; either way, they need to hear back from Council. In a healthy system, information flow is circular. The round table discussions at Congregational Meetings and these “Dessert ‘N Dialogue” sessions go a long way in helping Council listen. Council cannot please everyone; that’s not their purpose. They exist to build up the church, leading it in helpful and effective ways. A helpful tool may be to create a flow chart so people know whom to access for what kind of information and input. The recent letter about giving was a good wake-up call as to how Council needs to prepare the congregation for this kind of communication. But do members know whom to call when they wish to voice an opinion? When Council makes a decision, the membership needs to trust that they have the best interest of the congregation in mind, and needs to prayerfully support that decision.

B. WORSHIP

If there is any issue that people feel most strongly about, it is worship (as it should be, because this is the one activity we all engage in). The two questions we asked in this segment were:” 1) to what degree are alternative worship styles, e.g., drama, dance, helpful in enhancing worship? and 2) how important is it for us to have a worship coordinator in order for us to develop our worship services?

1) If there was ever a time when we had to listen to each other as we gave expression to the wide diversity among us on any issue, it was here. In general, there is a great amount of appreciation for our Worship Leaders, and for the blend of worship that we could call the unique “Covenant Blend.” There will always be that tug between more traditional music and instrumentation (namely, Psalter Hymnal songs played on the organ), and more contemporary music with other instruments such as guitars and drums. We must not let that tug become antagonism, but as our worship blend evolves, we need to respect the very subjective tastes everyone has without imposing one person’s definition of the “right blend” on everyone else. The congregation is relatively open to exploring creative ways of worship, such as drama and dance, but such worship forms need to be done well. Though there are many who remember the days when the pastor gave the organist his 4 hymns for the service and no one else needed to be involved, our structure today is much more complex, and because people are exposed to worship in many other churches and

on TV, their expectations are much different than in previous generations. Whether we like it or not, we live in a visual age. In addition, different people express their devotion to God in different ways; we need to respect those differences and make sure Covenant's worship is this church family's expression of its diverse worship styles. Music or drama, etc., may speak to some more than the sermon does. Everyone needs to be considerate in the choice of music that may not be for them but may be just what another member needs this particular Sunday. We need to guard against consumerism in this area. But we also need to bring our worship style up-to-date so that it speaks to both our current as well as future generations.

2) One of the benefits of the "D 'n Ds" was that we got to hear from the 4 Worship Leaders how much work it is to plan worship services. There has been no other forum for them to communicate this. They enjoy doing it, but sometimes get bogged down in administrative detail. We probably do need a Worship Coordinator, but perhaps the job description needs to be tweaked such that the Worship Leaders are free to create the services as they are gifted to do, and a paid position be created to take care of the administrative work. It might be helpful to think of putting a job of "Children and Youth Ministry Director" together with a "Worship Coordinator." The paid staff person could be responsible for recruiting and training a variety of groups which could lead in worship, such as a small orchestra, choirs, special music, etc. As worship services become increasingly complex, someone needs to be responsible for making sure it goes well, that all the parts run smoothly, every Sunday. We don't want to burn our Worship Leaders out; they're doing a great job!

C. FACILITIES

The two questions asked in this segment were: 1) do our facilities need upgrading and improving, e.g., audio-visual, nursery? and 2) should we have a dedicated space for youth ministries?

1) The one area of our church's life about which we feel most positive is our excellent facilities. We have a great piece of property that could be developed even more, such as community gardens, baseball diamond (we supposedly have one, but it is not used), and skating rink. Suggestions about having a more noticeable sign out front, sprucing up the nursery, prayer room/feeding room, creating an outdoor play structure, a welcome/information centre, and modernizing the audio-visual system (especially video-streaming for seniors) were given.

2) As to a dedicated youth space, many agreed that it is very important for youth to have an area in the building (or detached) that is theirs, where they can hang out, which they can decorate as they see fit, that helps them see that this church is really for them. The Fireside Room is too formal for youth. A big screen TV in there would help. We could use the ARCIA portable for our youth. How about a combined garage/youth building? Some expressed that Council should have its own "dedicated space" as well. And what about seniors? When the Cornerstone building is built, we'll have a special area for seniors; make sure there's an enclosed link between their building and ours.

D. FINANCES

The question asked here was: is our stewardship program effective in helping us learn to grow in the grace of giving?

The comment heard most often was: We have a program? Stewardship is, of course, bigger than money and giving to the church budget. It's a way of life. We mostly hear about giving when we're in financial trouble or when there is a big need. Is it possible to create a culture where we can nurture the spirit of "what can we do to help others?" That's counter-cultural to "What's in it for me?" Council's recent letter was an offence to some, but welcomed by others as a good reminder. In creating budgets for the following year, we should be taking this year's giving as a guideline. And incorporate faith and trust. Teaching biblical stewardship is a challenge in our day; in general, people will give for specific reasons: They will give:

1. to services they have themselves helped to create
2. to large challenges; generosity follows vision
3. and when they feel positively about the church.

Creating opportunities for healthy dialogue (such as these forums, or family visits, etc.) help people feel engaged with the church. We need to teach people about their responsibilities to give, but we also hope that people will give because they want to give.

E. MEMBERSHIP INVOLVEMENT

The question asked here was: is there a good system of recruiting, evaluating, and training members for both volunteer and paid positions?

The comment heard most often was: We have a system? Most ministries recruit people by begging and arm-twisting, just hoping to have enough warm bodies to fill the vacant positions. Most people who volunteer do so because they have a passion for that ministry; that does not mean, of course, that they are gifted for it. Except for paid staff (whose evaluation is the responsibility of the Committee of Administration), there is little formal evaluation. As for training, Worship Leaders can go to conferences; Deacons can go to the Day of Encouragement; Stephen Ministries has a rigorous training program; Alpha trains people by apprenticing; Coffee Break has trainers from the denomination; and GEMs has formal training. But for many volunteers, training is a "sink or swim" proposition. Pastors should be training officebearers; youth pastors should be training youth leaders. Phrases such as "hit and miss", and "flying by the seat of our pants" were used to describe the recruiting, evaluating and training system that exists. Further, how are new members incorporated into the service segment of the congregation? It seems as though the onus is on the volunteer to step forward and to ask for evaluations and training; it should fall on the ministry to provide that. We need to investigate a "Discover Your Gifts" system that helps people identify their spiritual gifts, and then track their use of those gifts. Recruiting would, then, mean going to that inventory and asking those who are gifted in a specific area to serve in that area. The big picture is creating a culture that makes the church a place to serve, and helps people to ask, "How can I help around here?" We need to find creative ways to communicate our service opportunities.

F. MUTUAL CARE

The two questions asked in this area were: 1) are pastors, elders, and deacons effective in their pastoral visits? and 2) are visitors and new members effectively welcomed and enfolded into our church?

1) A new pastoral care system was developed several years ago in which the size of Council was reduced, and the 7 elders and 3 deacons were given 15 pastoral care and 5 deaconal associates. This “D ‘n D” forum was a good one in which we could listen to each other about the effectiveness of the care received. For many it is non-existent. For some it was at their own initiative, and when it was given it was wonderful. The bigger the church, the more intentional we need to be about it. Elders could make group visits by inviting several couples/individuals to their home for refreshments and conversations (such as the “Dessert ‘N Dialogue” events). We need to clarify the congregation’s expectations of the pastor’s visitation; should he/she be involved only with the special cases or be expected to visit everyone? This church is too large for the pastor to visit everyone, but the pastor could be the overseer of the pastoral care system so that everyone receives care. If a pastor visits once every three years, does that develop a close enough relationship that you would go to him in times of trouble? The names of the elders are printed in the directory; is the onus on the member to find out who their elder is, or could there be a communication from the church office? In many churches, small groups were instituted as the primary place that pastoral care would be received and given. And how are new members informed of the congregational care system here?

2) Visitors and new members are very warmly and effectively welcomed; enfolded is a different story. In a large church such as ours, new people may still hear the question “are you new around here?” after they’ve been here 2 years already; we need to find a better question. Extroverts and those who are outgoing will find it easier to be enfolded than those who are more quiet and shy. So if the onus is on the new member or visitor, they’ll fall through the cracks. It helps if you’re Dutch or married to a Dutch person. In our increasing diversity, and as a large church, we need to be intentional about helping new people find their way into the church. Name tags were suggested as a helpful way to identify everyone. Some churches pass “Friendship Pads” through the pew and have everyone register. We need more potlucks and other social events that bring people together on an informal basis, such as Easter Breakfast, Fall Suppers, etc. Part of welcoming is having a non-judgmental attitude of openness, a genuine interest in who I am and why I believe the Lord led me to this place. We could create a culture where visitors and new members are regularly invited for lunch. We need a staffed welcome centre that will give information to those who are seeking it.

G. COMMUNITY AWARENESS

The question asked here was: do we understand our surrounding community and the target population God wants us to serve, and are we effective in reaching them? Should we be working with other churches?

Some people don’t like “target” language, but the fact is that God has designed us uniquely to be the people through whom He will call certain people others cannot reach.

We cannot be all things to all people, but we can be who we are to the people God has put us next to. Who is our community (does that sound like, Who is my neighbour? – Luke 10:29)—the area around the church building or the people in our own neighbourhoods or the people we work with, etc.? Maybe outreach is more an attitude than an action: loving others, meeting their needs, creating ministries that fit both us and the target population. The church, in its teaching and preaching, needs to build people's awareness of outreach challenges and opportunities, equipping them to do both word and deed ministries. We have both a personal obligation to reach out to our own neighbours and a corporate responsibility as church to be inviting and welcoming; maybe we need to revisit the hospitality team idea. We can do larger outreach projects with other churches (e.g., Transcona). God has really blessed us with people who do Alpha (up front and behind the scenes) in that some 180 people have been through our program, and our leaders have taught Alpha in other churches. Coffee Break has been run for a generation now and is a great ministry for single women, moms and kids. The days of growing ourselves by having lots of children is over; we need to reach out. But it does mean stepping outside of our comfort zones. And for that we need training and encouragement. We need to be willing to evaluate what's working and what's not and put our energy into what's working. We also need to look further afield, to such groups as Union Gospel Mission, Hope Centre, Indian Family Centre, as well as to Serve projects in other countries. There are more outreach opportunities than we can ever manage in a hundred lifetimes; we need to pick a few and concentrate on doing them well. These will come out of the passion and gifts of the members of the church; the rest of us need to support and bless those efforts.

H. INFRASTRUCTURE

The question asked in this area was: are we working together toward a common goal? Do we know what that goal is? Is every ministry accountable to someone/group to ensure that it is working towards that common goal?

Every ministry should be accountable, but no ministry should be stifled. Most accountability is done through Council liaison persons sitting on those committees and reporting back to Council. Our volunteer pool is shrinking as our seniors are getting older and in younger families both husbands and wives have careers. Do we need to think about closing down ministries that have a problem getting volunteers (maybe it is no longer meeting the need it was originally designed to meet)? Do we have an organizational chart, which clearly establishes the lines of communication and accountability? Is someone responsible for creating such systems as: recruiting, training, and evaluating volunteers; welcoming and enfolded new members; deployment of members in the area of their spiritual gifts, etc.? We have a common goal, printed in the bulletin every week, but does it beat in the hearts of our members? How do we create a culture where different ministries are being blessed even though we either do not agree with how it is being done or are not as passionate about it the way those involved are? We need to see ourselves as a family with different gifts and interests, pray for each other, and support and bless each other. Perhaps occasionally we need to participate in something outside our area of interest to discover what's happening there (e.g., Saturday night service). Fellowship activities need to be promoted as ways in which we get to

know each other on a social level. We need to be able to state our common goal in a few words that everyone can remember. “Outreach” and “growing in the faith” are not incompatible; they are different ministries of the church that both need to be done and will be done by those who are gifted in those areas. They need to be integrated in such a way that they feed off each other, support each other, and help each other grow. The common goal we are all working towards is building the church of Jesus known as Covenant CRC.

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E: AN ANALYSIS OF OUR STRENGTHS AND GROWTH AREAS by Peter Hogeterp

My comments will follow the outline of the 8 areas of the church’s life we surveyed and discussed, and give direction to Phase III.

1) Leadership:

a) There is a significant divergence of opinion between those who believe the pastor needs to be the leader of the church as an organization and those who believe the pastor needs to spend priority time and energy on being a shepherd of the flock. He/she is clearly ordained to preach and teach, and to equip believers to build Christ’s church. As a church grows larger, typically, the pastor is unable to provide pastoral care to the entire congregation.

b) A pastoral care system has been developed at Covenant, that includes lay pastoral care providers (we have elders, deacons, congregational care associates, deacon associates, Stephen ministers, and many people who unofficially provide care for many people).

c) At the same time, as a church grows larger, it needs to create a more efficient leadership culture. The lay leaders are volunteers, and though they have great leadership gifts and skills, the pastor, as the church’s full-time employee, is often charged with giving leadership to the organization. The two essential responsibilities of the pastor, leading the organization and shepherding the flock, are in constant creative tension. The church cannot make a choice between the two. But the church needs to make its expectations clear, and the pastor needs to be open to feedback about the balance between the two so that it is clear to both the pastor and the church that both the organization is well managed and the people (both members and prospective members) are well cared-for.

d) The leadership given by the Council was also a significant issue in our discussions, especially as it has to do with keeping the communication loop between Council and congregation open. The congregation elects its Council to give leadership to the church. But in a volunteer organization such as a church, it is crucial that Council both consults with the congregation regularly before it makes decisions and that it informs the congregation regularly on decisions made.

e) Council needs to create a communication loop that invites constant feedback, requests members’ opinions, and gives opportunity for forums in which the members can discuss significant issues in the church’s life. In a healthy system, information flow is circular.

The onus is on the Council to create the communication system: who do members call to give input (who is their elder and deacon), how do they give that input, what issues need the members' input and which don't, who does Council need to consult before a decision is made (at least always those directly affected by the decision), how does Council communicate its decisions, etc.? Open communication loops build trust in the membership of their leaders.

2) Worship

a) This church needs to, and loves to worship! There are many people who use their gifts to lead in worship and their leadership is appreciated. As in many other churches, there is a creative tension between "traditional" and "contemporary" worship (the labels are unhelpful, but everyone knows what they mean).

b) This church is relatively open to exploring creative ways to worship, as long as worship is seen not as a few entertaining the many, but as those who give leadership in worship helping all of us to worship God. Because our members are exposed to the way other churches and TV churches worship, the expectations of worship have grown exponentially in the past few years.

c) The church is an increasingly complex organization and a more diverse group of people; hence, the creative tension. With the commitment and skills we have, we should be able to develop a unique "Covenant Blend" that is our particular expression of our devotion to God. Those who design worship for us need to be sensitive to the congregation's feedback (it's their worship, after all) as to the balance in the blend.

d) As to the position of a Worship Coordinator (perhaps with a different title), there has been a significant shift in the congregation's openness to hiring a person who will both make sure that all the pieces are in place for meaningful worship on a Sunday morning (e.g. instrumentalists, vocalists, sound system and power point operators, etc.) and to develop new worship formats (e.g., orchestra, dance, drama, etc.). The "Dessert 'N Dialogue" events gave the Worship Leaders a forum in which to express to the membership the enormous amount of work involved in planning one worship service.

3) Facilities

a) We are extremely happy with our facilities, as we should be. Our facilities should be regarded as God's gift to us to be used by Him to build His church! We need to keep it current, update it as required (including audio-visual equipment, video-streaming of services, etc.), and explore additional ways in which to use our properties (e.g., baseball diamond, skating rink, outdoor play area, community gardens, etc.).

b) Perhaps it's time to de-mothball the expansion plans of several years ago (there are few things that energize people like a building program, because that enables the church to plan for new ministries for which the present facilities were not designed).

c) Along that line, this may be the time in the church's life where we should consider a dedicated youth facility. God is blessing Pastor Ken's ministry which is bearing fruit among us, there's a new spirit among our young people, and we may want to capitalize on that, striking while the fire is hot (or at least warm).

4) Finances

a) We do not have a good system of creating a culture in which people can grow in the grace of giving, asking the question, “How can I be of service?” Stewardship is about more than money; it’s a way of life. And it is clear that people give to ministries they themselves have helped to create, to large challenges (generosity following vision), and when they feel positive about the church.

b) We need to explore the many Stewardship resources out there and find one that fits our framework of thinking and that the church will buy into. People no longer give out of a sense of responsibility or duty; they vote with their money when they don’t get an opportunity to have their say in any other way, or when they are ignored.

5) Membership Involvement

a) We do not, either, have a good system of recruiting, training and evaluating volunteers. Much recruitment is done by trying to find a warm body to fill a vacant position, much training is done by the “sink or swim” method, and only paid staff are evaluated. Some individual ministries have excellent training systems (e.g., Day of Encouragement, Stephen Ministries, Alpha, etc.). But we need to investigate recruitment systems such as “Discover Your Gifts” that fits our church (Willow Creed happens to have a good system that helps the church not only in discovering its members gifts but also tracks the deployment of those gifts).

b) And in terms of involving new members, the onus is on the church to help them find their way into Covenant’s system. Let’s show them “The Path”.

6) Mutual Care

a) The new pastoral care system that was developed several years ago, with 7 elders and 15 pastoral care associates, and 3 deacons and 5 deaconal associates, is still a work in progress. In my experience, people are more concerned about receiving good care than they are about who is providing it. The pastor needs to do some pastoral care, but so does everyone else who has the spiritual gift of caring. Such people need to be carefully trained (note the Stephen ministry model) and held accountable (present system is excellent). It is unrealistic to expect that the pastor will visit everyone.

b) The pastor could be seen as overseeing the pastoral care system, making sure that needs are met, and met well. The congregation needs to be clear about its expectations of the pastor in terms of visiting, and the pastor needs to be sensitive to the feedback the Council is getting about whether he/she is measuring up to those expectations, and ensuring that people feel they are adequately cared for.

c) The church needs to seriously consider improving its system of welcoming and enfolding new members and visitors. This is no reflection on those who are presently using their spiritual gifts of hospitality (in fact, this church does better than most). But still the onus for finding their way into the church is placed largely on the visitor or new member, whereas we should be the people making sure they know the way in.

d) The church might want to be much more intentional and explicit about “the Path” new members and visitors can follow. This would include how to get into a small group, how to find adult opportunities for spiritual growth, how to find service opportunities, etc.

e) We need to find a good way to identify visitors (e.g., a welcome centre, name tags, friendship pads passed through the pew, etc.) and make sure they know their way around our building and get the kind of information they are looking for. A special “hospitality ministry” could be created.

7) Community Awareness

a) We do not need to ask the question, “Who is my neighbour?” Others have already done that. Our “community” is people around our church building, people around our homes, people at work, people we associate with in other settings (e.g., social clubs, sports teams, etc.). Outreach is as much attitude as action: love others, find ways to serve them, create congregational ministries that meet needs (e.g., divorce recovery, parenting, aging, etc.). We do outreach, to some degree, by being “salt and light.”

b) We need to learn how to be more intentional about both a word and deed ministry to our “communities.” Again, this is no indictment on those who are using their spiritual gifts in outreach (in fact, this church does this, too, way better than most). We do outreach, to some degree, by inviting people into a living relationship with our Saviour.

c) We need to bless those who are exercising their spiritual gift of outreach; they are following their passion and their calling, whether that outreach effort is Alpha, Love Winnipeg, an evangelistic crusade, Hope Centre, Indian Family Centre, or anything else God lays on the hearts of our members. We may be spreading ourselves too thin, so we need to make choices.

d) We also need to make sure that every ministry we have has an outreach component, whether that is GEMs, Cadets, Coffee Break, Men’s Breakfast, or any other ministry we offer. We need always to design every ministry to include non-members and visitors.

e) Some of the division in the congregation in the past came from an unhealthy imbalance between “outreach” and “inreach.” We need to arrive at a healthy “Covenant balance” between these two emphases; they must be complementary, not antagonistic.

8) Infrastructure

There are 2 areas of infrastructure work we need to do in Phase III: organizational chart, and a working goal.

a) I was unable to find an (working) organizational chart that would indicate who was responsible for which ministry and what the lines of accountability might be for every ministry.

b) As we continue working on our common goal, every ministry of the church needs to describe its mission in terms of that goal; every ministry is helping the church achieve its overall goal. In the church there should be no independent autonomous ministries; we are all working together towards building this church of Jesus Christ. As far as a goal goes, we do have an articulated goal as a church, printed on our publicity, including our weekly bulletin (see if you can remember it), but does it beat in the hearts of the members?

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Now we are ready for Phase III, developing a sense of where we believe God wants to move us in the next chapter of our history. Phase II was

meant to show us the areas we need to work on. Let us move into the future prayerfully, and with great expectation.