

**A REPORT ON PHASE THREE
OF THE TRANSITION PROCESS**
Covenant CRC, Winnipeg, Manitoba

December, 2009

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“For the time is coming, declares the Lord,
when I will make a NEW COVENANT...”
Hebrews 8:8
(see NIV text notes for the components of that new covenant)

Summary:

The third phase of the Transition Process arises out of the results of the Phase Two survey and the comments from the “Dessert ‘N Dialogue” Discussions. This information provided the Transition Team the direction necessary to develop Discussion Guides that steered the discussion of the groups that focussed on the key 11 issues that Covenant Church needs to deal with to move into its future. In this report Pastor Peter summarizes the comments made by people in the Discussion Groups and wraps the report up with his analysis of these comments and provides recommendations for our future.

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PART ONE

There were 11 issues that came out of both the Phase II Survey and the “Dessert ‘N Dialogue” discussions that were addressed in the Phase III Discussion Groups.

ISSUES ADDRESSED IN PHASE III **November, 2009**

1. Determine a workable balance between the pastor’s role as “leader of the organization” and “shepherd of the flock.”
 - a) It’s not about making a choice between these two roles, but creating a balance. The new pastor needs to know clearly the congregation’s expectations in both areas, but especially in terms of visiting.
 - b) The entire pastoral care system needs to be clarified so the pastor may know how he/she fits in (elders, deacons, congregational care associates, deacon associates, Stephen Ministers, etc.; see #8 below).

2. Clarify the communication loop between Council and congregation
 - a) On what issues does Council need to consult with the congregation, and when does it need to make decisions unilaterally?
 - b) Council needs to develop a communication system that keeps the congregation over-informed (redundant communication)—e.g., web page, e-mails, reports in bulletin, letters in mail, etc.

3. Create a definition of the “Covenant Blend” for worship

The divergence of worship tastes needs to be applauded as being in constant creative tension, and discussion needs to be encouraged so that we come to an agreed “Covenant Blend” definition of what worship looks like around here. This group will come up with a good definition, but that definition will not be set in stone, as worship is a constantly evolving process.
4. Hire a new Worship Assistant

There is already considerable agreement about the need for a Worship Assistant. The Worship Committee has proposed a new job description to Council. This needs to be vetted by the congregation for buy-in.
5. Expand the facilities; develop the property

We recognize our facilities as a gift from God. Now we need to decide what to do next, both in terms of additions to the building (e.g., separate youth facility, garage, etc.) and use of the property (e.g., sports fields, ice rink, community gardens, outdoor children’s play area, etc.)
6. Develop a Stewardship Strategy
 - a) We need to develop a culture in which people ask “How may I be of service?” This task force needs to come up with some strategies to that end. Also, many people no longer give out of a sense of obligation.
 - b) We need to explore the many Stewardship resources available and develop a “Covenant Stewardship Strategy” which the members will buy into.
7. Improve Membership Involvement
 - a) We need to develop an effective recruitment system for volunteers (e.g., Discover Your Gifts, developing a gifts inventory, etc.).
 - b) We need to set up a good system of training and evaluating volunteers.
 - c) We need to design a “Path” which new members can walk to help them get into serving the Lord and using their gifts at Covenant.
8. Clarify Mutual Care, for Members and Visitors
 - a) Evaluate the present pastoral care system (smaller council, additional care providers). And determine what the pastor’s role is in this system (see #1 above).
 - b) Develop an effective welcoming and enfolding system for visitors and new members (e.g., name tags, welcome centre, welcome packets, etc.).
9. Reach our Community Awareness (outreach) Potential
 - a) Create a culture in which both outreach and inreach are recognized as legitimate ministries of the church. And bless those involved in each as they are using their gifts to build Christ’s church. This is a work in progress, with creative tension between the two; and it is always evolving.

- b) Ensure that all our ministries have an outreach component (Gems, Cadets, Coffee Break, Men's Breakfast, etc.). This Task force will consult with each ministry to help them determine how that could be accomplished in their particular ministry.

10. Develop an Organizational Chart

We need to develop a working organizational chart, which clearly spells out who is responsible to whom, and what the accountability lines are.

11. Restate Our Unifying Goal

Every ministry in the church (as in every department of a company or every branch of an organization) needs to be working towards a common, unifying goal that beats in the hearts of the members. We need to revisit our present Mission Statement, Vision Statement, and Values to determine if they still apply to Covenant today. Do they need to be revised?

The Transition Team designed the eleven issues to be addressed in five groups. Group One would discuss Issues 1 and 8; group two would discuss Issues 2 and 10; group three would discuss Issues 3 and 4; group four would discuss Issues 5 and 6; and group five would discuss Issues 7 and 9; and each group would discuss Issue 11: restating our unifying goal. 135 people signed up for these group discussions, and the groups' facilitators and reporters were members of the Transition Team augmented by Harm Hazeu, Eva Miedema, Ken Douma and Evan Booy.

Two of these groups (1 and 3) met on Monday morning, November 9, and all five groups met on Monday evening, November 9, and again Thursday evening, November 12. The next part of this report is a Summary of Comments made by people at these group discussions.

PART TWO

GROUP ONE DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Pastor's Role/Welcoming and Enfolding

DETERMINING A WORKABLE BALANCE BETWEEN THE PASTOR'S ROLE AS "LEADER OF THE ORGANIZATION" AND "SHEPHERD OF THE FLOCK":

1. On a sheet of newsprint write down all the things you can think of that the pastor is responsible for (e.g., preaching, teaching, etc.). Don't forget local ecumenical, classical and denominational tasks.

- a) Decide whether each task falls under "leading" or "shepherding" (or is it something else?)
- b) Rank the tasks according to those you believe are most important
- c) Eliminate the tasks you believe the pastor should not be doing
- d) Now come up with a mathematical equation that is your expectation of the pastor's weekly division of his time
(e.g., 10% in ecumenical, denominational and classical ministries,
30% in preaching and teaching,
25% in giving leadership to the Council (including training and monitoring),
10% in personal study and reflection,
10% in sermon preparation,
15% in visiting (including pastoral counselling, conflict resolution))

2. How does the pastor fit into the overall pastoral care system at Covenant?

Possibilities:

- a) he is the teacher/leader/trainer for the pastoral care volunteers
- b) he is one of the pastoral care providers along with elders, associates, etc.
- c) his role as main shepherd is to care for those most in need
- d) he is the administrator of the pastoral care system, making sure that pastoral care is provided for everyone
- e) he does pastoral care with those that need specific attention from the pastor: e.g., baptism, wedding, funeral
- f) other

CLARIFY MUTUAL CARE, FOR MEMBERS AND VISITORS

3. Evaluate our present pastoral care system.
 - a) Does everyone understand how the system works (smaller council, additional congregational care associates and deacon associates, Stephen Ministers, small groups, etc.)?
 - b) What are the strengths in the system?
 - c) What are its flaws?
 - d) Come up with some creative ideas as to how to address the flaws?

4. How effective is our church in welcoming and enfolding visitors and new members?
 - a) Generally, in Phase II, we said that we're good at welcoming, not quite so good at enfolding.
 - b) On whom should the onus be placed: the visitor/new member, or the church?
 - c) If it's the church, come up with some ideas that might help us develop a healthy structure for welcoming and enfolding.
 - d) Do we need to have a hospitality team whose ministry would be to spot the visitor/new member, invite them over, answer their questions, find their way into the Covenant system?
 - e) Do we need to find a way to identify visitors without centering them out? Some churches have name tags, some pass "friendship pads" down the pews, an information centre in the foyer could give a floor plan to the building and tell visitors where different things are happening when, etc.

GROUP TWO DISCUSSION GUIDE

Communication Loop/Organizational Chart

CLARIFY THE COMMUNICATION LOOP BETWEEN COUNCIL AND CONGREGATION

On what issues does the Council need to consult with the congregation, and when does it need to make decisions unilaterally?

- a) Council members are elected to lead the church; in our current culture, members of an organization expect to have input in most things about which Council is deliberating. But Councils cannot possibly consult on all issues. (Why have a Council then?)

- b) The congregation needs to tell Council what kinds of issues they believe they need to be consulted on. Come up with sample issues that require consultation (the budget has been the traditional one).
- c) How can Council get input from members on various issues without calling public meetings, round table discussions, etc.?
- d) How does Council inform the congregation whom to contact when they wish members to comment on various issues (e.g., making sure they know who their district elder is, etc.)?
- e) Creating a communication loop (360 degrees) means requesting input from all members, especially from persons who are affected by a Council discussion. The Council informs members involved in the discussion before the decision is made public. Input-decision-output. How do we do it?
- f) What kinds of issues do you think the Council should decide on unilaterally?
- g) Is there a danger of information overload? Can you consult too much? How will you know when it's too much or not enough?

DEVELOP AN ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

We're not going to be able to create an organizational chart this evening, but there are some issues we need your input on:

- a) To whom should the senior pastor be accountable? (e.g., Council, Executive, Pastor-Church Relations Committee, etc.)
- b) To whom should the associate pastor be accountable? (e.g., the senior pastor, the executive, a youth Council, full Council, etc.?)
- c) To whom should the office administrator be accountable? (e.g., senior pastor, Committee of Administration, Personnel Committee, Council, etc.)
- d) To whom should the Worship Assistant be accountable? (e.g., the senior pastor, the Worship Committee, Executive, Council, etc.)
- e) To whom should volunteers be accountable? (e.g., nursery attendants, Sunday school teachers, Gems counsellors, Cadet counsellors, etc.—to whom are the volunteers in any of those ministries accountable?)
- f) To whom is Council accountable?
- g) What is the best way to make the church run most effectively and efficiently? Is our committee structure working well (committees tend to

- be permission-givers or -withholders rather than creative agents of change)?
- h) What decisions does Council need to make in terms of the various Committees? What decisions can it trust volunteers to make? Should we be looking at revamping the structure, so that the authority to make decisions is given to those most responsible for the effectiveness of the ministry? Who does the creative thinking for any ministry?
 - i) Do you agree or disagree: a) Council should hand authority to make decisions as far down the ladder as possible; and b) Council should not do initially, nor redo subsequently, Committees' work (perhaps send back for revision, but not do the revising)?

GROUP THREE DISCUSSION GUIDE

“Covenant Blend” Worship/ Worship Assistant

CREATE A DEFINITION OF THE “COVENANT BLEND” FOR WORSHIP

Worship is not now, nor has it ever been, a static event; it is in constant flux, and needs ever to be evolving. We need to come up with a definition tonight of what could be called a “Covenant Blend”—what does Covenant’s (the whole church’s) expression of its devotion to God look like?

1. How does living in our contemporary world inform our worship style? Should it? What about television churches, TV super-star preachers, area mega-churches, Vision TV, Christian Radio, etc.?
2. How does being Reformed shape our worship? (being “reformed” does not mean the minister picks 4 songs and tells the organist)
3. How does being part of the world-wide church of Jesus open us up to other worship styles (e.g., Hispanic, African, etc.?)
4. Are the words “traditional” and “contemporary” the best way to express what the tension in creating a “blend” is about? Is it youth vs. older? Is it seeker vs. believer? Is it an ideology? Is it a mindset?
5. Whom are we trying to please? Whom are we trying to address?
6. How can you guarantee that what we do on Sunday morning will be the congregation worshipping and not the congregation listening to

“entertainers” up front? How do you prevent the “up front” people from being seen as entertainers?

7. What about drama? Dance? Video (there are churches that use brief movie clips to set the stage for the world issue the sermon will be addressing) etc.?

So here’s our definition: (agree on a blend and state it here:)

(Sample: The ingredients of the “Covenant Blend” of worship are: 2 traditional hymns, 2 contemporary hymns and 2 fresh new hymns; a combination of instruments with the organ among them; a combination of vocalists including Praise Teams, children’s, youth and adult ensembles...)

HIRING A NEW WORSHIP ASSISTANT

The Phase II Discussion Groups became, unintentionally, an excellent forum for the current Worship Leaders to convey how much work is involved in planning and preparing for a worship service. In Phase II there was a clear shift between the time the Survey was done and the Discussion Groups had finished in the congregation’s thinking about the need for a paid Worship Assistant. (Notice the change in name for the position—formerly Worship Coordinator)

If we hired such a person,

- a) What do you think should be included in that person’s job description?
Should it be more administrative, more training of potential vocalists and instrumentalists, more creative, etc.?
- b) What do you think should NOT be included in that person’s job description?
- c) How many hours should this person work per week?

GROUP FOUR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Facilities/Property

EXPAND THE FACILITIES; DEVELOP THE PROPERTY

We recognize our facilities as a gift from God. A vibrant and growing church is always looking at how to both maintain the facilities in an excellent way, and what

needs to be the next building project to help the church continue to provide an expanding ministry.

Building:

- a) Make a list of the positive features of our building. (e.g., sanctuary, foyer)
- b) Now make a list of some of our facilities' shortcomings. (e.g., storage, meeting rooms, youth, etc.)
- c) What are we currently unable to do well because we don't have either enough space or the right space?
- d) What new ministries could we envision if we had the right space?
- e) What are our ministry priorities that need space first?
- f) How about a separate (attached or detached) dedicated youth area? The survey showed a high level of support in the congregation for this; is this the time to renew that vision? Or at least start some conversation with our youth pastor, youth leaders, and youth?
- g) How about adding an area that could be used as a DayCare Centre? We understand there is a shortage of DayCare space in our community and we might be able to offer a good community service in our building this way.

Property:

Our property is also a gift from God. Few churches are as blessed as we. Think creatively of how our property could be developed to include new ministries (e.g., sports fields, ice rink, community gardens, outdoor children's play area, etc.). This would take a lot of work but need not be expensive.

DEVELOP A STEWARDSHIP STRATEGY

1) How do we develop a culture in which our members ask "How may I be of service?" Think creatively about ways in which the church might address our severely individualistic and consumerist society.

- 2) Do you agree or disagree: People will give when
- a) they have helped create the ministry they are being asked to support
 - b) the challenge is sufficiently large; generosity follows vision
 - c) they feel positively about the church

3) Do you agree or disagree: Different generations are motivated differently (in other words, one stewardship strategy does not fit all).

For example:

a) People aged 60 and over are motivated by duty and obligation (they'll give money or themselves because they know someone has to);

b) People aged 40-59 are motivated by "bang-for buck" (they'll give money or themselves if they can be convinced that their efforts/dollars will really make a difference);

c) People aged 20-39 are motivated by experiential factors (I've got to feel it myself).

Is there any truth to that? If there is, how does that affect the way we design a stewardship strategy?

4) Do we need a Stewardship Team that will investigate various resources available and develop a strategy that fits Covenant (it seems the last one died because the membership did not buy into it)?

GROUP FIVE DISCUSSION GUIDE

Membership Involvement/Outreach Potential

IMPROVE MEMBERSHIP INVOLVEMENT

Most churches do not have a very effective system of recruiting, training and evaluating volunteers. Many ministries are happy just to have a "warm body," training is by the "sink or swim" method, and evaluating is "we (or someone) will let you know when you're messing up." There has to be a better way; the work we're involved in is of essential spiritual significance.

1. An effective recruiting system would involve finding the right person with the right gift at the right time in his/her life for a particular ministry.

a) Do you know any resources that have developed an effective system for recruiting? (there are many: the CRC has "Discover Your Gifts;" Willow Creek has developed a system that not only helps discover gifts but also tracks their deployment.). Would it be worth our while to investigate some of these resources?

b) Should this be done for elders and deacons as well?

c) Is it realistic to expect that everyone in the congregation should know his/her spiritual gift?

If we had a good recruitment system, volunteers would come forward in ministries which will use their gifts (and be able to decline without guilt when they're being asked to serve in an area outside of their gifts). Leaders would go to a "gift list" to find the names of people who are gifted in the area they need covered.

2. An effective training system would involve ensuring the volunteer knows the expectations of the ministry, is given a clear job description, and is taught how to do what they need to do. Some ministries have training available: Day of Encouragement for elders and deacons; Stephen Ministries; Alpha; etc., but many don't. Where are the gaps? How do we build training into our volunteers' expectations?

3. An effective evaluating system would be linked to closely monitoring the new volunteer in his/her first few months, letting them serve as apprentices to see if this ministry is a good fit for them, and having regular evaluation times throughout the season that helps the volunteer see where they are doing well and where they need to improve. Are we afraid to evaluate volunteers because we think it will put them off (actually, the opposite is true: the more we expect from a volunteer the more they are aware that what they are involved in is significant for the life of the church)?

REACH OUR OUTREACH POTENTIAL

1. Why, do you suppose, "outreach" and "inreach" are polarized in some churches? Is that a healthy polarity? Does the church need to make a choice between the two?

2. Which is more effective in terms of outreach: words or deeds? Which are we better at, at Covenant? Can outreach be done one without the other? How can they work together in a complementary way?

3. Are we spreading ourselves too thin in our outreach efforts? Are we trying to do too much: evangelistic crusades, Love Winnipeg, Indian Family Centre, Hope Centre, Alpha? Should we concentrate on a few, or let people do whatever God lays on their heart?

4. What role does worship play in evangelism? New believers who come to Christ through small groups do not typically attend worship; their church is their "small group;" some do join the church. What are our expectations of new believers in terms of worship? What about intentionally encouraging an expansion of small

groups for them? How does having an alternative worship service help (help whom: the church or the new Christian)?

5. Should every ministry at Covenant have an Outreach component? (E.g., many churches have more community people in such groups as Gems and Cadets than they have church members.) If you think it is a good idea, how do we make that happen? How can outreach become part of the fabric of what it means to be Covenant CRC?

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C. PART THREE

This section is divided into the eleven issues addressed in Phase III and captures the comments made by the members of Covenant.

Issue 1: The Pastor's Role: Clarifying a workable balance between the pastor's role as "leader of the organization" and "shepherd of the flock."

The following are the things, according to our members, that we recognize the pastor is responsible for (not necessarily in order of priority)

- Preaching (including 16/hr of preparation time for each sermon)
- Teaching (including mentoring Council members, training Sunday School and Catechism teachers, Profession of Faith classes, etc.)
- Pastoral Care (including counselling, sick, critical care, dying, grief, regular visitation in the congregation, etc.)
- Meetings (including Executive, Council, Elders, Classis, Worship, etc.)
- Personal spiritual development (he must take care of himself or he can not take care of us)
- Professional development (keeping abreast of the trends in our culture and the CRC, organizational skills, leadership development, etc.)
- Special Care only Pastor can supply (including baptisms, professions of faith, weddings, funerals, etc.)
- Family Time (most pastors need to schedule time with their family or they will not get it)
- Ecumenical and Professional Connections (pastors are invited to participate in Ministerial Councils, serve on Classical and Synodical Committees, etc.)

Most groups had a difficult time allocating percentage of time on the above duties and responsibilities for the pastor. Each week is different; each pastor is different. It was generally agreed that preaching and teaching should take the pastor's primary time and energy, with training and discipling a close second. Organizational and administrative tasks should be kept to a minimum, perhaps even hiring another person to take care of some of those details. Each group

felt it was important to guard the pastor's personal and family time; either Executive or a Pastor-Church Relations Committee needs to guard him from his need to be all things to all people.

The Second Part of this discussion had to do with the Pastor's Role in the Pastoral Care system at Covenant Church.

Most members of the church recognize that in a church our size the pastor cannot possibly do all the pastoral care. He does, however, need to be in touch with the people so that they are not strangers to him, or he to them, when he is preaching. The church has developed a good system in which many people provide pastoral care besides the pastor: elders, deacons, congregational care associates, deacon associates, Stephen Ministers, and many people on their own providing care behind the scenes. The pastor needs to be seen as the teacher/leader/trainer of the rest of the pastoral care volunteer staff. He should not, however, be the administrator of the pastoral care system; either a volunteer or a paid person can do the administrative work (tracking visits, making sure each pastoral care person is getting the help they need to make their visits, making sure each person in need of pastoral care is receiving it, etc.)

Issue 2: Clarifying the Communication loop between Council and congregation.

There is a sense among the members generally that Council does a good job of communicating their decisions, but does not consult the congregation sufficiently. It was helpful to discuss what the members' expectations are as to when they should be consulted. "Family Visiting" used to be part of the communication loop, but that is not happening any more. Now we need to be more creative in designing a feedback loop. But don't write off "family visiting" too quickly, especially for the elderly.

Our bylaws require us to consult on some issues: the budget, changing the by-laws, electing new council members. But even in those areas, could the budget preparation be more of a consultative process than it presently is (it has committee input but not membership input)? Mundane matters ought not to be consulted on; why have a Council then? Staff hirings (other than the pastor) ought to be left to those involved in those ministries; but adding staff should be part of a congregational discussion. Changing a policy on something that has been a long-standing tradition (e.g., changing from wine to grape juice at Communion) should be discussed by the congregation. "Children at the Lord's Supper" is a current issue discussed across the CRC. Round table discussions at Congregational Meetings are helpful, but Congregational Meetings are poorly attended; these kinds of forums would be more helpful. People need to have multiple open doors to the decision makers (suggestion box, e-mail addresses, surveys, town hall meetings, etc.). And then they need to know that their opinion has been taken into account. Council is indeed entrusted in the end to make the decision; however, it builds a lot of trust when people have been invited to give input into the decision. People need to know they have been heard. Council's decisions need to be informed by the members' input. Council should not assume, however, that every piece of input they get is representative of the whole congregation.

Council needs to do a better job of responding immediately to those who have sent letters, made suggestions, given input, etc. And when a decision is made Council needs to communicate to those same people of their decision with its grounds, before that decision is made public.

More information needs to be made available to the members as to how to access Council. Who is your elder? When do you write an official letter? And to whom is it addressed? How do you register a concern or complaint? How do you get something on Council's agenda?

Council members are elected to make decisions on our behalf. The Presbyterian system of church government is not a democracy; it is rule by the elders or, in our case, Council. We trust them to make decisions that are best for the church. They do have to follow Canada Revenue Agency regulations with respect to charitable donations; and they have to follow the CRC Church Order. And most of all they have to do what Scripture tells us to do. Members of the church will necessarily fall in line with what those three documents require.

Issue Three: Create a definition of the “Covenant Blend” for worship.

The discussion guide asked each group to come up with a definition, indicating what “ingredients” should be included in the “Covenant Blend.” Each group was very hesitant to do that, or at least to make it a hard-and-fast rule that every service needs to have, for example, two “traditional” hymns and two “contemporary hymns” and two “new hymns.” Specific formulae destroy the creative spirit. It is more important that the hymns/songs that are picked FIT the theme of the service. It needs to be well done, be of high quality, be the best we can be. The theme is given by the pastor, but the service reflects the “style” of the worship leader. Worship leaders, guided by the pastor, need to be in tune with all the different tastes and expectations of the members; it is the congregation that is at worship. We give high priority to worship not being performance or entertainment; it is the worshipping community's expression of its devotion to God. If it's all about pleasing God, then we should not get distracted by what we like or don't like. Music often speaks more loudly to people than the sermon; audio-visual presentations, drama and dance, help a lot of our members understand the gospel of grace. Shouldn't we be eager to involve them as well? Many older members are thrilled when they see young people leading in worship, and are more than willing to give up their own favourite hymn for a young person's favourite song (they can always put a their own favourite cd on when they get home). Because of our sanctuary's excellent acoustics, it is a joy to listen to the whole congregation sing wholeheartedly a song they know well and love dearly.

The variety of tastes in music does not necessarily go along traditional/contemporary lines, or older/younger, or formal/informal. We need to create the kind of culture in which we humbly defer to someone else's tastes. And we need to remember that God is the audience of our worship; it's all about pleasing Him.

Issue Four: Hire A New Worship Assistant

During Phase II, between the time the Survey was conducted, which showed the majority of the members did not favour hiring a Worship Assistant, and after the Phase II “Dessert ‘N Dialogue” Discussions, there was a significant shift in the perception of the membership as to the need for

such paid staff. Though there is still some hesitation in adding staff, which means paying someone for what others are doing as volunteers, it is largely recognized that there are staff positions that need to be added both as the church grows and becomes more complex, and as society evolves into a culture where there are two working adults in each family and there is less time for volunteering of any kind. Our worship leaders currently prepare our worship services, recruit participants to be on the worship teams and have a weekday practice of the music for the service. The Worship Assistant (the title has been changed from Coordinator to Assistant) would take care of the administrative details, gathering resources, recruiting participants, tracking licensing requirements, etc.—making sure that all the pieces needed for Sunday worship are in place. Depending on the gifts of the person we hire, this person might also be involved in forming new musical groups (e.g., quartets, choirs, instrumental groups, etc.).

Issue Five: Expand the facilities; develop the property.

The groups were asked to list both some positive and some negative features of our current facilities. The building received high praise during Phase II and, once again, we were able to identify some reasons why our building is a wonderful gift from God. It is handicapped accessible, has an excellent foyer (gathering area), beautiful acoustically-alive sanctuary, good-sized gym, comfortable fireside room, and good classroom space.

On the negative side, there is insufficient storage space, the library space cannot be expanded, the office space is not expandable (for adding future staff), not good Council meeting space, nor good youth space. And in terms of the property, it could use some professional landscaping to make it look more attractive.

What future ministries could we envision if we had the right space? The ARCIA building could be very helpful to us in terms of developing a ministry to seniors, perhaps even hiring an activity director. Our youth need a dedicated, preferably attached, space that would be theirs (we may want to revisit a plan developed 3 years ago); the ARCIA trailer might become available as a first step in this development. And the possibility of either renovating current space (what is now the Multi-Purpose Room was originally designed for Day Care possibilities, with 2 doors leading to the outside) or adding a new building to house a Day Care Centre. We would provide the space and pay for the utilities for an arms-length Organization that would run the Day Care in our building. There was considerable enthusiasm for working on an addition to our building that would meet these needs of both a Day Care Centre and our own Youth Ministries.

The property could be developed further into sports fields, such as baseball and/or soccer; a hockey rink could be built (difficult to maintain), and part of the property could become a community garden (especially for ARCIA residents).

Issue Six: Develop a Stewardship Strategy

The question was asked: How do we develop a culture of serving? Serving is not always about big strategic ideas. We need to be made more aware of the needs, and then we need to have coordinated efforts in meeting the needs God especially lays on our heart. Maybe we can do

some of that ministering to community needs (such as mowing grass, shovelling snow) with other area churches. Winnipeg Harvest, collecting food door-to-door, younger people helping older people set up their computers and trouble-shooting, were some of the ideas presented. In our individualistic society, we need unifying projects to which we can all commit (building our current facility was such a project).

Stewardship is much more than fund-raising; it is an attitude, a way of life. It's tithing time and talents as well as money. It's making the best use of the resources God has provided us with. It is clear that different generations are motivated differently (there is some cross-over) but generally, people over 60 are motivated by duty and responsibility, people in the 40-59 age bracket are motivated by knowing they are getting bang-for-the-buck (their gifts are making a difference), and people 39 and under are motivated by experiential factors (such as going to a foreign country on a Serve Project). We need to be clear on what Stewardship really is, and what we expect a future Stewardship Committee to do.

Issue Seven: Improve Membership Involvement

It was generally agreed that we do not have a currently healthy system of recruiting, training and evaluating volunteers. Our recruitment is generally of the arm-twisting variety, our training is often a sink-or-swim strategy, and our evaluation is generally letting people know when they're doing poorly. We need to have a "gifts inventory" of all our members so that when a ministry is looking for a volunteer, we may go to our "inventory" and suggest names of people who are gifted in that area. The many people who are already ministering in the area of their gifts may not need to go through a "Discover Your Gifts" workshop, but people who aren't sure what their gifts are, or what they could do in the church, would be greatly helped. New members and young people making profession of faith should be required to go through such material; that's in part how we will create an expectation that being a member at Covenant means serving our Lord in some ministry in this church.

There are times when a ministry has run its course, when it is no longer meeting the needs it was originally designed to meet. Perhaps it is having difficulty recruiting new volunteers because people can't get as excited about that ministry as they once did.

Several ministries already do training by mentoring or apprenticing. Stephen Ministry has a very intense period of training, which would be good, in perhaps abbreviated form, for all pastoral care personnel to go through. Years ago, newly installed elders and deacons were mentored by older, more mature office-bearers. Now pastors and/or others need to give training to office-bearers so they may know the church's expectations for them.

Evaluating can be most helpful when done in a spirit of "what do you need from us to help you do your job better?" Evaluators, perhaps, need to be trained to do that well. How can we give positive affirmation when it is deserved (our CRC culture seems to be averse to giving compliments)? Most volunteers would appreciate knowing when they are doing some things well, and where they can improve. Let's not be afraid to evaluate because we think people will be less willing to serve; the opposite is true—people are more willing to serve when they know they are going to get help along the way, and they won't be left floundering.

8. Issue Eight: Clarify mutual care for members and visitors.

The present structure (of a smaller Council, congregational care associates, deacons and deaconal associates) is not well understood. It was new information to many that over 800 visits have been made to members in the past year, that over half of the congregation is being served by a congregational care associate (and that they have a manual which explains the expectations). We need to come up with creative ways to communicate how the system functions. But perhaps we also need a Pastoral Care Coordinator who will monitor how well the system is functioning and identify where the gaps are. More could be done to inform each member of who their elder, deacon, congregational care associate or deacon associates are; should the office generate that kind of a letter?

The pastor's role in the pastoral care system is seen mainly as the teacher/leader/trainer for the pastoral care volunteers, as the primary care-giver for those most in need, and to give attention to those that need specific attention from the pastor (e.g., baptism, wedding, funeral, etc.). He should be a caregiver among the other care volunteers, and he should definitely not be the administrator of the pastoral care system (better to hire someone else to do the administrative tasks).

How well are we doing in welcoming and enfolding new members? We believe we have a relatively effective way in making people feel welcome when they first come. In a church our size, it is difficult to know who is a first time visitor (there's nothing more embarrassing than to ask a long-time member if this is their first time here; we need to find a better way to ask that question—e.g., "I'm trying to remember your name, but it's not coming to me right now;" that will give them an opportunity to say, "That's because I've never been here before"). We need to open up our social circles, both in the foyer before church and in the fellowship hall after church, to make space for a new person. We need to be on the lookout for people who are standing by themselves

Developing a Welcome/Information Centre would be a good place to start. But it needs to be staffed with people that are both hospitality-oriented and knowledgeable. We do have cards in the pews for visitors, but they are not widely used (or promoted), partly because they're in with a bunch of other information. Perhaps we need to come up with a better, non-threatening way of identifying visitors. The Welcome Centre could contain basic information about the church and its ministries. We could give them a small gift (like a coffee mug or pen) as a memento of their visit here. If they do give an address or phone number (which generally means they are open to hearing from us) we should make a follow-up visit or call within 48 hours. We have tried a Ministry Fair in the Fall which included tables from all the ministries; very few people availed themselves of those opportunities. Maybe we need a Hospitality Team whose main assignment would be to identify visitors, help them find their way into both our building and our system

9. Issue Nine: Reach our Community Awareness (outreach) potential.

The groups started out by talking about the polarization between “outreach” and “inreach,” recognizing that a lot of people have left the church in the past 10 years or so, and the sense is that that is due, at least in part, to our not giving priority to the spiritual development of those who are already here. Others see the emphasis on “inreach” as our desire to just be comfortable with each other, the people we already know and with whom we agree.

In terms of outreach, we need to stop beating ourselves up for what we’re not doing. We are doing a lot, in many ways and places. Maybe we need a more formal way of recognizing all the ministries our people are involved in. We get upset when the whole church doesn’t get as excited as we are about what we’re doing. Why can’t we just say something like “God bless you, but that’s not for me”? Many of our members are involved in Hope Centre Ministries, Indian Family Centre, Winnipeg Harvest, Union Gospel Mission, etc. That may not be bringing new members into the church, but isn’t that outreach too? Have we not been successful until we’ve brought new believers to make profession of faith in our church? One person read an unsolicited letter that he had just received from a non-Dutch person who was visiting a CRC church in another town, in the 1950’s when the church was still very much Dutch, and found there such a feeling of hospitality and belonging that he wanted to be part of it.

What place does worship play in evangelism? There is a variety of opinions among us, some believing that if it’s going to happen it will happen at worship, and others believing that those who newly come to Christ will not feel comfortable in our worship as we do it today (it’s too big, too formal, too complicated). Do we need to change the way we worship to attract outsiders? Or can we focus on biblical preaching and rely on God to bring people in? We have tried a Saturday Night Service, which probably was intended originally as a Seeker Service, but evolved more into an Alternative Worship style. Should we have an occasional specially-designated Youth Service which can promote more freedom in dress, style, hand-raising, hand-clapping, etc., to which visitors might also be invited? Do we need to change our name so that people from the Community know this is a Community Church (there was considerable enthusiasm for this in one group)? Seekers will come because they have a relationship with someone who regularly worships here; maybe we need to work harder at forming relationships with seekers.

10. Issue Ten: Develop an Organizational Chart

The discussion largely centred around accountability lines, especially for paid staff, but also for volunteers, committees, etc. An organizational chart does exist, but is not current. What was most clear was that the Council is accountable to the congregation, and the senior pastor is accountable to Council. After that, there was some divergence of opinion as to whether the Associate Pastor was accountable to the Senior Pastor or to Council. And when it came to the Office Administrator, it was even more fuzzy, because even though she is technically accountable to the Committee of Administration, it is difficult for someone off-site to properly supervise that person. The Worship Coordinator’s line of accountability was similarly fuzzy, moving between accountability being towards the Worship Committee, the Senior Pastor and the Council. And when it came to ministries and committees, there was considerable discussion about how Council mandates these groups, how it receives their recommendations, and how it acts on them (often redoing work that has already been done by committee).

It was observed that our committees are not working as effectively and efficiently as they might. The position of Ministries Coordinator was again seen as a possible help in providing a solution. But maybe we need to be more creative about how the structure could be designed. The buck stops with Council, but Council will get totally bogged down in the minutiae of what all the ministries and committees are doing if they have to examine, tweak, redo and revise everything it receives.

11. Issue Eleven: Restate our unifying goal

All 12 groups that met were asked to spend a little time looking at our current mission statement: **Sharing Christ until All Fully Reflect Him.** Nearly every group agreed that this is an unattainable goal, but as they talked that through became aware that that is precisely what makes it a good mission statement: we will never get there, it is beyond us, but it is something we strive to do. Many people worked hard at putting this statement into its present form; it does not need to be changed. Besides which, the process of getting to a mission statement is more important than the mission statement itself. Perhaps mission statements are greatly over-rated; more important to walk the walk than to talk the talk. The majority seem to sense that the average member doesn't know this statement; if you were to ask people, "What is our mission statement?" you would probably get either a blank stare or some muttering about sharing Christ. A mission statement is not very effective if it does not live in people's hearts and minds. If a mission statement needs a lot of explanation and promotion, perhaps it is not the right one. Most did not want to spend any more energy on either revising this one or coming up with a new one. A more realistic question was: how do we communicate this, promote it, and break it down into manageable chunks? One group came up with a really innovative tweaking, just turning the words around: Reflecting Christ until everyone is fully sharing Him!

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D. Part Four

An Analysis and Recommendations, by Peter Hogeterp

My comments will follow the Outline of the 11 Issues discussed in the Phase III Discussion Groups. I will divide my comments into three sections: a) What we all agree on; b) My recommendations for the short term (next 12 months); and c) My recommendations for the long term (next 5 years). This will be our road map into the future as the direction we believe God is taking us. We will call a new pastor who will lead us into this new future.

1. Issue One:

The Pastor's Role as either "Leader of the Organization" or "Shepherd of the Flock."

We agreed that preaching and teaching should take the pastor's primary time and energy, with training and discipling a close second. Organization and administrative tasks should be kept to a minimum, perhaps even hiring another person to take care of some of those details. Each group felt it was important to guard the pastor's personal and family time; either Executive or a Pastor-Church Relations Committee needs to guard him from his need to be all things to all people.

My recommendation for the short term:

spell out our expectations to the new pastor as clearly as possible, recognizing that much of what the pastor will do depends on his personal leadership style and his preaching and pastoral gifts.

My recommendations for the long term:

- a) do an annual evaluation of the pastor, especially in terms of his workload, making sure he takes sufficient time for himself and his family,
- b) insist that he keep himself fully accountable to the Council to keep in balance the time spent on various tasks in ministry as is best for the church, and
- c) with feedback from the congregation negotiate with him as to what areas of his ministry he needs to adjust in terms of time spent.

In terms of his place in the entire pastoral care system, we agreed that in a church our size the pastor cannot possibly do all the pastoral care. He does, however, need to be in touch with the people so that they are not strangers to him, or he to them, when he is preaching. The church has developed a good system of many people providing pastoral care besides the pastor: elders, deacons, congregational care associates, deacon associates, Stephen Ministers, and many people on their own providing care behind the scenes. The pastor needs to be seen as the teacher/leader/trainer of the rest of the pastoral care volunteer staff. He should not, however, be the administrator of the pastoral care system; either a volunteer or a paid person can do the administrative work.

2. Issue Two

The Communication Loop between Council and Congregation

We agreed that things are improving in Council's communication with the congregation in terms of decisions made. But the members still feel like they are not being consulted enough, do not have enough input on matters before Council, and are not sufficiently informed. This is often the case: that the receiver doesn't receive near as much information as the sender thinks he is sending, or what is received is not understood in the way it was meant by the sender, or the sender assumes a lot of background information the receivers are not privy to.

My recommendation for the short term:

- a) that Council informs the congregation when it is dealing with certain issues (perhaps provide the Agenda for public consumption), invite input from the members, invite the members to attend Council meetings (except when personal issues are being addressed), and keep the feedback loop open (informing members of the many different ways in which they may contact Council corporately or their elder individually).

My recommendations for the long term:

- a) create a clearly defined 360 degree communication loop, offering public forums for discussion about issues Council is dealing with (e.g., children at the Lord's Supper), and educate the members on how this loop works;
- b) do more educating of the membership about the complexity of the issues (e.g., explaining the need for adding staff), letting members into the consideration of issues earlier, so Council can get their input; and
- c) inform those effected by a decision before the decision is made public, always using the formula: Consult; Decide; Inform.

3. Issue Three

Create a Definition of the "Covenant Blend" for Worship

We agreed that it is neither possible nor desirable to come up with a specific formula for our blend of worship. In fact, formulae destroy the creative spirit. It is more important that the hymns/songs that are picked FIT the theme of the service. It needs to be well done, be of high quality, be the best we can be. The theme is given by the pastor, but the service reflects the "style" of the worship leader. Worship leaders, guided by the pastor, need to be in tune with all the different tastes and expectations of the members; it is the congregation at worship. We give high priority to worship not being performance or entertainment; it is, instead, the worshipping community's expression of its devotion to God. If it's all about pleasing God, then we should not get distracted by what we like or don't like.

My recommendations for the short term:

- a) celebrate the unity we have in Christ,
- b) appreciate the diverse styles we enjoy at Covenant, and
- c) promote the fact that worship is about pleasing God!

My recommendations for the long term:

- a) understand that worship styles vary constantly, that our style will never be set in stone.
- b) that the tension between "traditional" and "contemporary" has always existed and will always be in creative tension, and
- c) be open to continuous feedback from the members (who are the real worshippers, after all) as to the way the "Covenant Blend" is functioning for them.

4. Issue Four

Hire A New Worship Assistant

We agreed that though there is still some hesitation in adding staff, which means paying someone for what others are doing as volunteers, it is largely recognized that there are staff positions that need to be added both as the church grows and becomes more complex, and as society evolves into a culture where there are two working adults in each family and there is less time for volunteering of any kind.

My recommendation for the immediate future:

a) hire a new person, with the new job description, having the right qualifications, and buying into Covenant's mission, vision, and values.

My recommendation for the long term:

- a) evaluate the Worship Assistant's work at the minimum on an annual basis (maybe initially on a quarterly basis), with input from the Worship Leaders, the Worship Committee and Church members, and
- b) make it possible for either the church or the Worship Assistant to exit the position gracefully should the evaluations suggest we need a person with different skills.

5. Issue Five

Expand the facilities; develop the property

We agreed that our property and facilities are a gift from God! We agreed that there are some shortcomings, but by and large the facilities are in most cases more than adequate for our present ministries.

My recommendations for the short term:

- a) work on a beautification plan for the property in terms of attractive landscaping,
- b) dust off some of the future building plans that were developed several years ago, especially in terms of Youth Centre and Child Daycare space.

My recommendations for the long term:

- a) consider upgrading and updating sight (power point) and sound (sound booth) equipment,
- b) develop a specific long-term maintenance plan so that eventual costly repairs (e.g., roof replacement, furnaces, etc.) can be budgeted for in advance,
- c) that the Committee of Administration be divided into two committees: a building and grounds committee (which would draft long-range building and maintenance plans) and a Finance committee (which would create budgets, etc.)

6. Issue Six

Develop a Stewardship Strategy

We agreed that stewardship is about more than money and fund-raising; it's a way of life, it's creating a culture in which people will eagerly say, "How and where may I be of service?" It is about understanding our current culture, about understanding the generational differences as to what motivates people to give, and helping people see Covenant Church as a legitimate place to donate time, talent and treasure.

My recommendations for the short term:

- a) do some educating about what we mean by stewardship in the congregation (e.g., have a stewardship emphasis month, using the pulpit, small groups, and classrooms to focus on the biblical concept of stewardship, etc.),
- b) to investigate the resources that are available (e.g., from Faith Alive, Barnabas Foundation, etc.) and develop, with grassroots input, a program that is ours,
- c) appoint a Stewardship Committee to do the above.

My recommendations for the long term:

a) look at serving beyond our neighbourhood, whether, for example, in Winnipeg's north-end, (e.g. a Habitat For Humanity Home built by Covenant Church; renovating the Indian Family Centre. etc.) or in some third-world country. Serve projects do more to help people understand how blessed we are than anything else we could teach; they are spiritually stimulating, and they foster unity among the members.

7. Issue Seven

Improve Membership Involvement

We agreed that we do not currently have a healthy system of recruiting, training and evaluating volunteers. Our recruitment is generally of the arm-twisting variety, our training is often a sink-or-swim strategy, and our evaluation is generally letting people know when they're doing poorly. These are three areas that need attention: recruitment, training and evaluation.

My recommendation for the short term:

a) either hire a Ministries Coordinator or set up a Volunteers Mobilization Committee whose task it is to prepare a "Gifts Inventory" of the membership. This would need to include a "Discover Your Gifts" workshop (at least, a questionnaire) for those who do not know their gifts, a listing of what ministry area people are presently serving in, and an indication of areas in which people might be interested in serving. When a ministry has a vacancy, this person or committee would be consulted as to possible candidates with the requisite gifts.

My recommendation for the long term:

a) carefully and specifically spell out the components of our recruitment, training, and evaluation strategy. This will be especially helpful for young people making profession of faith and new members joining either by transfer of membership or conversion. The larger the church, the more clearly these strategies need to be spelled out. In fact, the Ministries Coordinator or Volunteers Mobilization Committee should be responsible for creating a "Path" that new members can be shown which will give them the steps they can take from being a visitor to being a full-fledged and active, participating member of the church.

8. Issue Eight

Clarify Mutual Care, for Members and Visitors

We agreed that our new pastoral care system is poorly understood by the members (i.e., smaller Council, elders, deacons, congregation care associates, deacon associates, Stephen

Ministers, etc.), that we need better and clearer information about how pastoral care can be accessed at Covenant, and that in a church our size, the pastor cannot be expected to visit all the members. With respect to welcoming and enfolding visitors and new members, we agreed that we do a good job of welcoming, but not so good at enfolding.

My recommendation for the short term:

- a) find creative, multiple ways to communicate how the new pastoral care system works, how people can access it, and what reasonable expectations of the pastor, elders and associates might be.
- b) In terms of welcoming, a soon-to-be installed Information Centre will be a great asset; it needs to be staffed with hospitality-oriented and knowledgeable people.

My recommendations for the long term:

- a) create a non-threatening way to identify visitors (e.g., send friendship pads down the pews during the offering) that will help us follow up with them as soon as they are ready. They will typically indicate they are ready when they leave an address and/or phone number; that indication needs to be followed up within 48 hours.
- b) In terms of enfolding, form a Hospitality Committee to help identify visitors, and create ways to help them feel at home with us and find their way into the Covenant system.

9. Issue Nine

Reach our Community Awareness (Outreach) Potential

We agreed that there should be no polarity between “outreach” and “inreach” as both are required of the Church. Much of the official, regular business of the church is “inreach.” But we also have many members whom God has gifted and who are passionate about reaching out to their neighbours, and serving in community organizations. We need to bless each other, and praise God that people have gifts across the board, some of which focus on those who do not know Jesus as Lord, and others of which focus on people growing in their relationship to Him.

My recommendations for the short term:

- a) that we together believe and understand that Christ will build his church through both outreach and inreach; that we all, together, thank the Lord He has blessed our church with people who are gifted in both areas of ministry, and
- b) to pledge what we will work towards strengthening the ministries of both, as we pray and encourage all our members to use their gifts in building Christ’s Church in the way Christ has gifted them, through His Spirit.

My recommendations for the long term:

- a) think creatively about how to ensure that every ministry of our church has an outreach component. There are many churches that have, for example, successful Gems and Cadets programs in which the majority of participants are from outside the church, and
- b) to revitalize the Outreach Committee, whose task, in part, will be to monitor the development of the outreach component in each of the church’s ministries.

10. Issue Ten

Develop An Organizational Chart

We agreed that in terms of accountability, the Senior Pastor should report to Council; the accountability for other staff need to be clarified: perhaps the Associate Pastor should report to the Senior Pastor (currently directly to Council also), the Office Administrator to the Senior Pastor (currently to Board of Administration) and the Worship Assistant to the Senior Pastor (currently the Worship Committee). The Senior Pastor would serve as Head of Staff, and issues with staff would be resolved with staff. It is nearly impossible for (off-site) Committees to supervise paid staff (the supervisor needs to be on site). Unresolved issues would go to a Personnel Committee, or the relevant Committee, with eventual appeal to Council.

My recommendations for the short term:

- a) develop an organizational chart (the old one is no longer current) that clearly spells out the lines of accountability of all staff members, Committees, ministries, etc. A small Task Force could work on this (Council could recruit some people who participated in the Phase III Discussion Groups).
- b) Consider hiring a Ministries Coordinator who would monitor the effective functioning of all committees, ministries, etc.
- c) Establish a Personnel Committee, which will monitor and evaluate staff.

My recommendations for the long term:

- a) Council needs to create a culture in which decisions are made as far down the accountability ladder as possible; Council's agenda would, then, include only the recommendations from each of the committees, ministries, etc. Council would, then, not do committee work, nor redo committee work, but only act on their recommendations
- b) The Ministries Coordinator would see that all reports get to Council on time, and in a format that makes decision-making at the Council level easier.

11. Issue Eleven

Restating Our Unifying Goal

We agreed that our current mission statement, though largely unattainable, because it is largely unattainable serves us well. A lot of work went into this mission statement, and it still functions for us. Unfortunately, it is not well known; we need to promote it more, and we need to dedicate ourselves to living it. We're not sure what it means "to share Christ." Many suggestions for a new statement were given, but most agreed that we shouldn't keep changing it (is that a good use of our time?). Maybe it isn't the statement that needs changing; it's our attitude.

My recommendation for the short term:

Elevate the mission statement so that everyone knows it, believes it and lives it

My recommendation for the long term:

Revisit the mission statement after a period of time to make sure it is still us, is still known, and is still owned by the membership. If any of these is not true, it may be time to state it differently. The process is as important as the end result.

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MY FINAL RECOMMENDATION:

That Council appoint an Implementation Team to prioritize, revise and monitor the above recommendations. Some recommendations may be dismissed outright, some may need to be edited, but each ought to be considered carefully. An Implementation Team will ensure that all the hard work done in the past eight months will bear fruit, and not be put on a shelf to gather dust.

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Now We are Ready to move into the future, with new energy, new tasks, and new hopes. We eagerly anticipate God’s direction for us in choosing a new pastor. We prayerfully pledge ourselves to work together, as one Body with diverse opinions and a variety of gifts, to build the kind of church of which our Lord would be proud!

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD WILL BE WITH YOU WHEREVER YOU GO.” (Joshua 1:9)