

Core Leadership Retreat, 3-24-2018

In attendance: Joe Lee, Laura Baumgartner, Brad Beeman, Darrell Lowe, Livonia Lowe, Rich Detering, Linda Detering, Melinda Lilley, Patty Ferguson, Robbin Price, Roger Ingalls, Jen Hoerber, Dorothy Beeman, Janice Zahn

We started the meeting in song, singing the first verse of "Come and Find the Quiet Center."

Announcements:

Budget: Melinda reminded us that the stewardship campaign is coming up right after Easter. She has invited several folks in the church to speak, and so far she has confirmed that the Browder family will speak on April 22 (when we'll only have one service), and Melinda and Jen will speak on April 29 (also a one-service Sunday), when they'll focus on the kitchen. Melinda also pointed out that Marie sent out the monthly financials for February last week. (If you didn't receive them, let Robbin know, and she'll forward her copy to you.)

Mission Sunday: Laura Baumgartner and Linda Detering have lined up several options for Mission Sunday, including, among other things, birthday party kits, ivy pulling, and stream clean up. Sign ups will be in the narthex, as they were last year. We're also investigating possible projects with Sophia Way and the Newport Way Library. We do need a few more group leaders, and don't want to add too many projects until we have leaders for all the projects we currently have planned.

Action Item: *If you are able to lead a group on Mission Sunday, or know someone who can, let Laura or Linda know.*

We will also be inviting our friends and neighbors to join us, using the Nextdoor website and other social media. (Additional note: we agreed in church on the Sunday immediately after our retreat to invite the Muslim community to join us, since the outreach they do has suffered with the loss of their mosque. Thanks, Janice, for bringing us this opportunity to connect with our neighbors!)

Brad's Sabbatical: Brad's sabbatical will start on April 1, immediately after Easter services. He asked if we had any questions, and there were a couple, notably if he would have any time to rest during his time away. He said that although he has planned a lot of research at seminaries, churches, and with a variety of experienced folks in the field, he will be factoring in time to rest. He also reminded us that his goal is to bring back good ideas to make Aldersgate better and stronger, and we all wish him well on his journey.

At this point, we continued with the meat of the retreat, which combined devotional activities with practical discussions about our priorities and plans for the coming year. I can't possibly describe the whole tree, so here are the fruits:

We reminded ourselves of some of the core values from our mission statement: Faith, Love, Health, Service, Inclusivity, Vibrant, and Christian.

Then we divided into small groups and recorded a variety of church activities or goals that we felt were important in light of our core values. We then gathered the things we had written and went through a process of prioritizing them and sorting them into categories, with much lively discussion. (Librarians can be particularly stubborn about categorizing things, and a certain secretary who shall not be named needed to be restrained more than once by her patient colleagues.)

In the end, we had three columns, under three broad headings:

Cultivating an Inclusive Culture	Fellowship and Discipleship	Faith into Action (Faith with Feet)
Attendance (worship) and Growth (community resource)	Bible Study	Intergenerational Mission Opportunities
Expanding the Kingdom of God	Intergenerational music	Doing Coffee in Groups (coffee hour)—everyone takes a turn
Develop a Culture of Invitation	Process for Discipleship	Advocate for creation
Multicultural Congregation	VBS	Deeper sense of ownership and responsibility
Inherent feeling of constant Joy and Enthusiasm (felt by anyone here)	Sunday School	March for our Lives (advocacy for safe schools)
Proactive Welcome	YAHS	Initiative 1631—gathering signatures
Beyond our Doors—Diversity	Club 345	
Inclusivity (Hospitality, Outreach)	Open small groups with purpose	
Perceived as open and accepting (we are, but do “they” know it?)	Multigenerational small groups	
New kind of “evangelical” A place of Good News	Tables for Eight	
Supportive and caring of each other (specifically pertaining to facility use)	Youth (mission trips, leadership opportunities, confirmation)	
Changing the basic culture of comfort, order, and security	More resources for Children Youth and Family Ministries	
Care groups for the elderly, sick, housebound		
Peer support group for those w/mental illness		
Reaching community, collaboration and communication		
Connecting with the preschool		
Building community connections with our neighbors (library, community center, park)—invite to events		

This shed some light on where we want to put our energy and focus.

Time was flying by, and we went on to discuss two practical matters that needed our attention.

Rock Church and how we welcome the “other”: Rock Church is moving to Bellevue First Presbyterian. This offers them a single place where they can do all their activities: church, Sunday school, ESL classes, and Bible study, and we wish them well in their new location. We discussed the ways in which we were welcoming to Rock Church, as well as things that might not have seemed as welcoming. And we acknowledged again that the decision to host Rock Church was not handled as well as it might have been, and seemed abrupt to some in the congregation.

This led to a discussion of how we welcome those from different cultures and those with different needs, and stories were shared about how easy it is to feel left out when a group excludes you, perhaps by speaking a different language around you. Feelings were shared about how a changing community can present challenges as different people navigate relationships with different neighbors. This was a hard discussion, but it gave us the opportunity to feel each other’s passions and concerns. May God always bless us with the ability to share candidly with each other our concerns, our hopes, and our honest opinions, and always with respect and love.

Peer Support for Mental Illness: Janice presented an opportunity for our church that was brought to her by NAMI, the National Association of Mental Health, and YES, Youth Eastside Services. There is a need for peer support groups for the mentally ill on the Eastside, and they are looking for a place for a group to meet. After much discussion, debate, and reformulation, it was proposed that we invite someone from NAMI to come speak to the congregation about the good work they do, and after that, to invite a peer support group to come and use our space. Many youth in our area suffer from anxiety and depression, and we want to support them. Also, mental health is a topic we want to know more about. We all approved this decision, and since Janice had to leave before we had finished the discussion, Dorothy volunteered to connect with Janice and find out if there is a member of NAMI that can come speak on April 29, which is the Sunday after our Mission Sunday. This seemed an appropriate time to learn about this need.

We ran out of time before we could discuss the possibility of signature gathering for Initiative 1631. Laura left us with an article to read on the subject, and the topic will have to wait until our next meeting.

We packed a lot into 4 (and a bit more) hours, and at this point we ended our retreat with prayer. Thanks to those who provided the yummy snacks that sustained us throughout (Patty, Joe, Dorothy, Linda, and Jen, I think, and who am I leaving out?). And appreciation for Patty’s use of the phrase “Faith with feet,” and Roger’s ability to get coffee into a song we shared. And may the fruits of our retreat multiply!

These minutes (and occasional random comments) are respectfully submitted by Robbin Price. All omissions and misstatements are mine, and corrections are very much appreciated.

Next Core Leadership Meeting: April 16, 7:00 pm