

Core Leadership Meeting with the District Superintendent, Rich Lang, 10/24/16

In attendance: Holy Spirit, Katie Olleman, Robbin Price, Janice Zahn, Rich Detering, Jen Hoerber, Patty Ferguson, Stan McKenzie, Linda Detering, Brad Beeman, Melinda Lilley, David Lutz, Joe Lee, Dorothy Beeman, Steve Rummel, Jack Morrison, Rich Lang

We started the meeting with song (10,000 Reasons by Matt Redman) and prayer.

The meeting started with a summary of our past accomplishments and activities. We had paper graphs that showed our attendance, apportionments, and other statistics up through 2015. Then Brad gave us some information about 2016. So far this year we've had 9 baptisms (up from 0 last year), 14 people joining the church, a number that may go up to 20 before the year is out, and 15 confirmands, 13 of whom joined the church. We have 134 active, giving churchgoers who have given about \$500,000 this year, and we are operating in the black.

At this point, Rich Lang presented us with a meditation, talking about God's eternal relational love that led to the development of the human race. We are creatures that can create or destroy the civilization we have, and we need to recognize our role and rise to the challenge.

Rich thanked the leadership for the packet of information we put together for him. He is optimistic about the future of the Northwest and the Methodist church. He sees an abundance of spirituality and creativity here. He is also optimistic about Methodism, because of God's great common grace poured out to all, and because most Methodists believe in critical thinking and making room for a variety of views.

Rich shared the 5 Practices of Fruitful Congregations, from the book of the same name by Bishop Schnase:

- Radical Hospitality
- Passionate Worship
- Intentional Faith Development
- Risk-taking Mission and Service
- Extravagant Generosity

He observed that in most churches, intentional faith development was not provided effectively, that it was enough just to show up.

He also shared the Characteristics of a Vital Church, according to Steve Ross (Director of Church Revitalization):

- They generate all the resources necessary for their own maintenance (leadership, facilities, finances)
- They provide blessing to the community where they live (care, justice, comfort, healing)
- They multiply the kin-dom (gospel community, community of faith)

Rich mentioned that if he went around the neighborhood and asked, he should get a clear picture of what our neighbors know about us, and if they think of us positively.

Then Rich welcomed discussion from the group.

Joe Lee started us off, saying that he sees so many great things here, mentioning our giving nature and willingness to provide service. His concerns are that we are not good at evangelism, and we don't reach out effectively to the community around us. The neighborhood has changed and is diverse in ways that aren't reflected in our church body. He feels that additional pastoral support would allow us to build more outreach to the neighborhood, and he is looking for guidance from the district.

Linda Detering mentioned that we have a positive record with the neighborhood, noting the use of our grounds and playground. She mentioned that we need signs to show that the grounds are those of the Methodist church and that we welcome our neighbors. She also shared stories about a woman who came to the recent rummage sale to make a donation, saying that she and her grandson use our playground all the time and that she had bought him a bicycle two years ago at our sale and wanted to give back. Linda also mentioned a man who came to the rummage sale because his wife had come earlier in the day and told him about how kindly she had been treated; they both left with a very positive view of the church.

Jen mentioned that we invited teens to our flashlight Easter egg hunt who were hesitant to come because "we're not church members." When they were told they were welcome anyway, they came, connected with friends, and had a good time.

Jack talked about the difficulty of raising the needed funds for the great things we want to develop. He talked about the capital campaign for the kitchen, which was very successful, but also challenging. He talked about how hard it is to get volunteers, because people are working longer hours and have more commitments. He mentioned that our leaders are getting older, and we need seed capital to grow.

Janice pointed out that we are a good church, but that many of our leaders are burnt out. We need time for spiritual renewal for our leadership. This means building a growing community with a larger pool of enthusiastic people.

Dorothy pointed out that the staff is also exhausted, in part because they pick up the slack when volunteers aren't available.

Jack mentioned that we have vision, but don't have the means to execute it.

Joe asked how we can keep the church up and growing, and how to help the laity pursue our vision.

Jen related the frustration of younger families. They feel that their kids have fallen through the cracks, that the programming wasn't meeting their needs. Now we have more stable programming and more positive responses from specific people when they are asked to help. We are building relationships and pulling younger families in, but it's a slow process. She pointed to the value of Kids Club, which builds relationships across generations, and Club 345, a new group designed for upper elementary kids.

Janice pointed out that some folks are naturally gregarious, and some aren't. She also said that to get kids involved in church activities, they need to be invited by folks who aren't their parents. She also mentioned that we need shepherds for our resources (like our technology) so that things run smoothly when someone does want to take on a project.

Katie pointed out that it can be hard to engage young adults. It's easier to get them to connect than to volunteer to lead. Stan pointed out that when he has joined churches over the years, he would be asked to do small things early on, and would say yes to them. Perhaps we need a list of small, simple things we can ask of people to help them feel connected and useful.

Melinda observed that some people come to church to rest after a busy week, and aren't anxious to do things for the church. She thought having mentors would help.

Dorothy observed church isn't the priority it used to be, with the many activities pulling families in all directions.

Linda suggested that perhaps volunteering needs to be taught.

Joe asked about training from the district. Rich mentioned two ideas he thought might be good for us:

- Getting Kristina Gonzales to offer us training on cross cultural education
- Bringing Christy Fisher in to talk about how to reenergize a group and creating a culture shift so that people take their discipleship seriously. (She has been remarkably effective at the Wesley Club at UW.)

Rich talked about the need for laity to be involved and the need for a "high tech, high touch" focus. High tech, because that is how we communicate these days, and high touch, because it's truly about building relationships.

Rich warned that more staffing isn't the answer: a strategic investment in staffing for a limited time and a targeted purpose could help to mentor our community, but that we need to be able to move on from there. The laity has a very large role to play in growing the church.

He talked about how the district is planting new churches, putting younger pastors in healthy churches for a short time to build their skills and be mentored, then moving them on to new places to build new churches from scratch. He talked about how churches that pass a tipping point will wither and die. He suggested that Aldersgate might want to nurture a pastor who would then move to start a new church.

Janice mentioned our Beyond our Doors grant, which is meant to fund a person to help us develop our outreach.

Rich pointed out that toys and gimmicks won't bring us families; that's all available outside the church. What we do have to offer is relationship, and, primarily, a place to develop spiritually. Everything we do should be an extension of teaching spiritual development. And we need to be able to talk about the spiritual skills we're teaching.

He also mentioned that there are other people of faith around who might have time to help, although they can be hard to find. Someone like that might be a help at Aldersgate, rather than a part-time pastor.

The goal is to create spirituality where everyone does a little, and much gets done.

Action Item:

Group	Leadership	Focus	Budget	Revisit
Core Leadership	Joe Lee	Find appropriate focused leadership training for Aldersgate	tbd	In 45 days (January Core Leadership meeting)

There was more talk revolving around our desire to grow and improve. We agreed to pray about what the church we want looks like, and to think about what we need to reach our goals. Rich pointed out that we are in a transition, with our changing community, but that there is great potential and possibility on the other side of it.

Emergency Shelter Meals Calendar: A Proposal

At the end of the meeting, Janice requested that Core Leadership approve posting the calendar for volunteer meals for the women's emergency shelter in the newsletter and bulletin. The vote was unanimous.

We ended the meeting in prayer.