



Church of the Redeemer
Visions of Ministry 2011
Continuing the Discussion – August 22, 2011

Fifteen parishioners met at the Duke of York at 6 PM on Monday, August 22 to share a meal and to follow up discussions that began at our May retreat.

Group 1

“Reaching Out”

This group of seven people began by looking at the final section in the Overview of the Main Themes that Emerged from the Open Space Discussions: “Serve”. It was suggested that this title was too broad and should be changed to “Outreach” or “Reaching Out”. The latter resonated with the group because it seems to encompass many different groups, whereas “Outreach” is often defined as serving marginalized people.

After this, people reflected on “reaching out”: what we’re currently doing and what we could be doing:

- **Extending an invitation to neighbours:** One person mentioned that he belongs to a tenant association in his neighbourhood, and the association members knock on doors introducing themselves and extending an invitation to get involved. Ruth Fox’s efforts as an ambassador for Redeemer’s *Christmas Carol* and Christmas services were remembered; she visited 300 places extending our welcome. People thought we should make this effort again. An initiative about five years ago was also mentioned: sending postcards to local residents inviting them to Christmas services. The cost and environmental implications of an effort of this type would need to be considered.
- **Concerts:** Someone noted that Knox Church hosts concerts on Saturdays, just for the love of music, and that this is a great way to introduce Redeemer to people who wouldn’t normally come through the doors. It’s a way to make the church a “safe place” to enter.
- **Being open:** Several people thought the church should be open to the public as much as possible and noted that our building and location create opportunities for evangelism. It was noted that we are open quite often (when the sandwich board sign is out), but the timing isn’t consistent and is dependent on staffing. (We need to maintain Shirley’s safety if she is alone in the building.) It was recognized that being open would put demands on financial and people resources, but the group put a lot of value on having the church become a welcoming, open place. The past practice of having the church open on summer Saturdays, supported by a rota of volunteers, was mentioned and praised. One person also noted that we need to have our facility more open before evening events: getting up the courage to come to an adult learning event

and then being confused about which entrance to come to and then finding a locked door is off-putting. “There needs to be a balance between safety and trusting in God’s care.”

- **Proclaiming who we are:** When people do come in, the group thought it would be helpful to have written information on hand to explain what the Anglican Church and what the Redeemer community believe in. It was noted that at Doors Open the most common questions aren’t about the architecture but about what Anglicans believe and what differentiates us. We need to recognize that most people aren’t familiar with the Anglican tradition and want to know where we stand. One person mentioned what Grace Cathedral in San Francisco does: it has a table of printed resources about the basics of Christianity and inclusion of the gay community, as well as a post card with service times. This kind of material would help to market the church and would be helpful to newcomers who might be intimidated by talking to someone who they don’t know over coffee.
- **Small groups:** Once people are in the door and coming to church, we need to do a better job of helping them to grow roots and get to know each other. One person mentioned something her parents’ church does: “Dinner for 8”. Interested people are assigned to groups of eight people (some newcomers, some long-established parishioners), and they have dinner together four times over the course of a year. There’s no agenda other than to build community.

Providing opportunities for people to deepen their spirituality

Slightly different from the discussion of “reaching out” – but not unrelated – was an emphasis on the opportunity we have to provide a spiritual experience that so many are seeking. Several ideas were suggested:

- **Putting sermons, lectures, and services on-line,** like the Cathedral now does. It was noted that we’re quite close to putting up podcasts of sermons, but there are copyright issues to sort out regarding the music used in services.
- **Creating a Centre for Spiritual Development** like the one led by Marianne Borg (Marcus Borg’s wife) in Portland. It offers classes, lectures, and multi-year programs in Christian education. It was noted that we have so many resources in our Honourary Assistants and parishioners; we should be tapping into their knowledge and using it more effectively. People with deep understanding of First Nations and environmental issues are just a few of the resources.
- **Deepening links with Wycliffe and Trinity:** do they have open houses? Do they offer continuing education programs?
- **Creating a contemplative life**
 - organize retreats
 - revitalize Peace Prayers – change the timing?
 - construct a labyrinth in the lower level during Lent
 - help people find spiritual directors
 - help people experience faith of the *heart* as well as the *head*

People resources

Although we didn't explore this deeply, there were comments that people at Redeemer are really good at generating ideas, but we need to work on getting more people involved in turning those good ideas into reality.

Financial resources

We didn't explore this deeply either, but there was a short discussion of the Diocesan, and our own financial, campaign and a suggestion that we need to tell and retell the story of Redeemer no longer supporting its ministry through our endowment. We have a lot to be proud of regarding the amount of money we give to the church each year, particularly considering that we were so reliant on our endowment before Andrew's arrival. We can celebrate this and use this story as part of the upcoming financial campaign.

Group 2

This group of eight people considered each of the themes that had emerged from the May retreat.

People resources

- Documentation and training manuals were recommended as important resources. Greeters inviting parishioners to go up to receive communion at 11:15 was cited as an opportunity for improvement. Some feel they are being held back and that there are gaps when communion ministers are waiting for people to come forward.
- Welcoming newcomers is very important.
- Put forward some new opportunity to attract new offers of help. In the last year a sound system team has been created, and in the near future it is anticipated an audio editing team will be needed to prepare recorded sermons as podcasts.

Financial Resources

- Balancing services and funding, replenishing our endowment and phases 2 & 3 of Making More Room should all be part of our plan for the next 3-5 years.
- Requests for money for Making More Room need to be clear and specific about what will be accomplished in phase 2 and phase 3. Fear about the amount of money that needs to be raised may not be helpful. We need to remind ourselves what a tremendous success phase 1 of Making More Room was. We raised the money for that and this year we also funded the purchase of a new dishwasher/sterilizer. We need to build off that success, reminding people what good is being done with the money they give.
- Outside sources of money from foundations and the business community should be considered in fundraising.

Building Community

This was considered a really important theme. Additional ideas to be added to those already raised:

- Breakfast for 60s & 70s (or other groups who are interested).
- Dinner parties – pot luck suppers at people’s homes.
- Gather in small groups including some former parishioners who still keep in touch.
- Once a month get together after service for brunch.
- The social aspect of meals before events at the church is very important.
- Post the parish directory online. It was noted that privacy issues would need to be considered.

Faith/Worship/Theology

Adult Learning/Options for Theological Discourse

- Change the medium – blogs, Twitter, Facebook.
- Green/environmental programs have been popular in the past. It was noted that The Sacred Balance, a series hosted by David Suzuki, will be shown on 4 film nights at Redeemer starting September 21.
- What is meant by “secular” in the comment “Christianity in a secular age”?
- John Bell is a great speaker. Is there an opportunity to get him for something?
- It is hard to get people out to events. Could we consider alternatives such as people using Skype to “meet”? Or an online forum? It was suggested we check out Bishop Cronyn Memorial Church.
- Are there opportunities with Trinity and Wycliffe Colleges? Information sessions where we could ask questions?
- If discussion groups were held after Sunday worship, sometimes with invited speakers, would we do this twice, once after each main service? Cost and food would have to be considered.
- With regard to the suggestion that more experimental programs be considered such as yoga or arts programs, it was suggested there may be members of the community with skills they would like to contribute to something new we haven’t thought of.

Children/Youth/Young Adults

Ideas for Children

- Junior Choir

Ideas for Teens/Young Adults

- With regard to webcasts/live streaming of services, confidentiality will need to be considered.
- Offer a service directed at university students at 4 PM on Sundays.
- Create volunteer opportunities specifically for the U of T church community.

Serve

Reaching out to our ‘Hood

- Do we know the demographics of our area? Could we get those to help inform us about our neighbours?

- Is there an opportunity for Redeemer to partner with social service agencies to provide social services to those with modest incomes – Toronto Community Foundation, United Way, East York Community Care etc.
- Offer ‘Meet and Greet’ evenings at Redeemer or at a local pub for special interest groups such as senior gay men and women. Loneliness is a theme that isn’t restricted to any one group and speaks to the need to build community discussed earlier.
- Although more related to pastoral care, one person mentioned he taught hand massage and exercises and would be willing to do hand massages in conjunction with visiting seniors in nursing homes.
- Commissioning at services was mentioned. One person had attended a church where home communion ministers were commissioned and sent out at a service and returned by the end of worship. This was a powerful symbol of moving out into the community.

Final Comments

- Not everyone is able to contribute time. The church must “travel light” so it is scaleable. We can’t be all things to all people. We need to prioritize our core and non-core offerings. Our values should dictate what we offer, and we need to consider what we offer that no one else does.