



Church of the Redeemer
Visions of Ministry 2011
Continuing the Discussion – July 25, 2011

Nineteen parishioners met at the Duke of York at 6 PM on Monday, July 25 to share a meal and to follow up discussions that began at our May retreat.

Group 1

Starting point for the conversation was around adult learning.

- There needs to be a continuum of intentional formation and inclusion. At present we have a program for those new to faith/community and then we set them loose into the 'wild' to figure out the rest of it within the vast expanse of offerings.
- We need to be more 'structured' in our approach understanding that we are all part of the formation, nurture, development, growth of faith and in the practice of faith.
- How do we be a Christian in the world today shaped by an increasingly secular culture around us?
- There is a difference between education and formation - education gives knowledge; formation is the practice of faith, it addresses the issues that arise within a secular worldview
- Formation begins with our children but isn't limited to them because there are adults who come into the community with no faith tradition and are at the same starting point as our younger members – each age group has needs for formation.
- Church gives us an opportunity to connect with 'like-minded' people where we can speak openly about faith and practice (like minded was not meant as group think but rather the sense that this is safe space to live out faith in a world that may be increasingly hostile to faith traditions)
- Interfaith dialogue
- Practical theology

Our community has changed and we can't ignore that reality – our structures need to help to shape us as much as our programs.

- Some thoughts that perhaps small groups might help in community building – whether those are based on geography or affinity – although not quite certain how this would happen even though willing to be part of trying.
- There are some who only want the Sunday worship experience and do not want to become more involved - we need to honour that (although perhaps draw them out a bit more within that experience!)
- Not convinced that we need to worry as much about bridging between communities – perhaps it is okay that there is a 'Bach vespers' community and a 'rock Eucharist' community etc and that we would be better served to support efforts that help those smaller clusters

connect within their gatherings as part of the whole rather than trying to make us all one big collective. Community building is always needed – perhaps this is enough.

- Develop a group of ‘community ambassadors’ who are the connectors between the services – they are the ones who move between communities getting to know folks rather than trying to bring everyone together. Acknowledgement that given the sheer size of our community we can’t come together for ‘combined’ worship services the way that we once did.
- Children, youth, young adults are part of the community and their formation needs to be part of the wider approach that we could be embracing – it is ‘old thinking’ that this cluster is our future...they are here now and we can’t view putting resources into their formation as a way to ensure the future of the church. Put resources there now because they are part of the church alongside everyone else – just as we put resources to all other age groups.
- The notion that young adults are ‘seeking’ more than other age groups may not be accurate. Some young adults may have been actively engaged in church for more years than some 50-somethings. Age and stage of life can influence needs – some adults who are now empty-nesters are finding the time to explore more deeply what faith means.
- Programming aimed at drawing the ‘young’ market may be missing other folks because it has a narrow focus.

The subcategories in “serve” seem to focus on the community around us – outward looking – and may not be noting our own needs.

- Wondering about the Centre for Urban Ministry and what the potential there is:
 - Multi-faith/secular understandings
 - Could it be asking some of the tough questions about life in a post-Christian world
 - Could it be a tangible, noticeable, ‘lived out’ form of evangelism – actions not words
 - Is it about ministry on the margins – expanding the lunch program and building it into something more?

The endowment fund question seemed out of place in a visioning retreat but if understood in the context of being part of our on-going stewardship of resources and that the building up of it might be done in concert with the building up of our community it might be an opportunity to share out of a sense of abundance rather than scarcity.

There was the suggestion that we look for grant opportunities for funding – beyond our lunch program but also for our other ministry areas. Michelle connected with Amy because she has experience doing grant-writing.

In summary, there was definitely passion for seeing faith formation as being for all ages and stages; that it was about recognizing that age is not an indicator of where on the continuum of faith

experience you are – that 20 somethings can be ‘old-timers’ and 50 somethings seekers. There was a deepening emphasis on the questions around how to be church in a secular world; how to be people of faith in a secular world.

Group 2

Children/Youth/Young Adults: under the “Ideas for Teens/Young Adults” section there was a request to add the idea of creating a support group for parents of teens, both around faith and around other teenage parenting issues.

Volunteering: there are so many gifted people at Redeemer it can be intimidating. There may be the perception that we have too much talent and don’t need help, and yet work is being done by the same group of people. Are we setting priorities? Should the volunteer coordinator be a paid position?

Group 3

Big Ideas

Two people noted that the main themes that emerged from the Open Space Discussions seemed to be “more of the same” rather than new, bold initiatives. However, these people and other people in the group also noted that maybe we don’t need new, big ideas, maybe we’re on the right track, but just need to do things better.

Lunch Program

This led to a discussion about becoming more entrepreneurial, particularly within the Lunch Program. Maybe we need to explore social enterprises, such as the Trinity Square Café, through which the Church of the Holy Trinity provides training and jobs to adults living with mental illness. Yes, we have the Caretaker Internship program, but it provides an opportunity for only one person every six months. Maybe we need to ramp up this kind of work.

On the topic of the Caretaker Internship program, someone suggested that we should reach out to other churches and tell them about the program. Maybe they have positions that would be appropriate for those who have “graduated” from the program.

Other churches that don’t already have a strong social justice program may be interested in partnering with Redeemer to provide volunteers or other support for our work in downtown Toronto.