



Church of the Redeemer
Visions of Ministry 2011
Continuing the Discussion – Summer 2011

On Friday, May 13 and Saturday, May 14, 2011, over 90 members of the community gathered to begin the process of setting a course for the next 3-5 years at Redeemer. The Very Rev'd Peter Elliott, Dean of Christ Church Cathedral in Vancouver, was an engaging and gifted facilitator for the weekend.

The May retreat was, however, just the beginning of the process. No decisions will be made until after Andrew Asbil's return from sabbatical in October. Our task now is to review what happened, pray, talk with one another and let the Spirit help us discern where we go next as a community. In the fall a working group of staff and lay volunteers will be struck. The working group will review all of the ideas that came out of the retreat and the follow up discussions and develop a report/strategic plan that will be presented at Vestry for approval in February 2012.

Continuing the Conversation...

At the retreat, Peter Elliott used a concept called “open space” to help us “self-select” into discussion groups. People who had an idea wrote it on a Post It note along with a time and location and stuck it on a wall designated as “the community bulletin board”. Eighteen people came forward with ideas. Some of us participated in one group for the entire time and others moved from group to group (the “bumble bees”). At the end of the day, each group gave a brief report of the conversation in their group. It was all a bit chaotic but it worked!

Two informal evenings of community building and follow-up discussion of themes from the retreat are planned on Mondays, July 25 and August 22 at the Duke of York, 39 Prince Arthur Avenue. We'll be starting with dinner at 6 PM and discussion around 7 PM. If you plan to attend, please sign up online our website or call the church office at 416-922-4948 so that we can ensure enough seating in one area is available. Each person will be responsible for his or her own food and beverage charges.

Overview of the “Open Space” Conversations To Date

We recognize that we posted a lot of information about the retreat on the website (under “Quick Links” on the home page) and that it may not be very accessible particularly to those who were not there and did not participate in the “open space” experience. We have therefore prepared a summary of the main themes that emerged from the group discussions at the retreat. While we have tried to capture the main ideas, the summary is not comprehensive – if you want details, the complete reports are available on the Redeemer website. All grew from Peter Elliott's observation that our mission is to create a new reality in the world.



Moving forward with the conversations...

Our “open space” experience in May was steeped in liturgy. The session opened and closed with bible readings, prayers and singing. There was a real sense that we were walking on “holy ground” and all of the conversations were carried on in that spirit – with a sense of mutual respect, gentleness and courtesy. As we move forward through the summer and continue the conversations, let all of our discussions reflect that same spirit. We close with a stanza from one of the prayers that was used in the liturgy at the retreat.

Lord, give wisdom before we speak,
 understanding while we listen,
 sensitivity towards those we meet,
 and the perspective of your kingdom
 in which to see the things of the earth.

Amy Buskirk – Chair, Advisory Board

Karen Clarke – Witness

Audrey Danaher – Vice Chair, Advisory Board

Louise Greig – Vice Chair, Board of Management and Witness

Joan Robinson – Witness

John Whincup – Chair, Board of Management

Marjorie Wrightson – Witness



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Overview of the Main Themes that Emerged from the Open Space
Discussions

For purposes of this summary, we've grouped the conversations that occurred in various groups under some main headings. If you have an interest in a particular topic we would urge you to read the full reports on the website.

People Resources

- **Time and Talent**
 - Identify and involve untapped resources
 - Lower barriers to getting involved
 - Address overworked staff and lay leaders

Financial Resources

- **Balance Services and Funding**
 - Priorities/value/transparency
- **Replenish our Endowment**
 - Keep operations and endowment monies separate
- **Making More Room – Phases 2 and 3**
 - Fear re. the amount of money that needs to be raised

**Building
Community**

- **Deep longing to connect on a deeper level, but how?**
 - Small groups, but need structure/boundaries
 - Geographic/demographic/topical groups
 - Social activities to mix congregations together
 - Update parish directory

**Faith/
Worship/
Theology**

- **Adult Learning**
 - Bible Study, done differently and going deeper
 - Make Christianity relevant in a secular age – offer challenging, disturbing educational offerings that ask the hard questions
- **Options for Theological Discourse**
 - Discussion groups after Sunday worship on topics of current interest, sometimes with invited, well-known speakers
 - More experimental programs: yoga and arts programs
 - Reach out to young adults through a focus on Christ and ecology
 - Consider Globe & Mail forum approaches for some events

Children/
Youth/
Young Adults

How can the church continue to be relevant for children as they grow older?

- **Ideas for Children**
 - Involve them in tactile ways in music programming
 - Embed children in services more often in key roles. Be intentional in providing opportunities to serve.
- **Ideas for Teens/Young Adults**
 - Presence on social networks
 - Webcasts/live streaming of services
 - Meet elsewhere if church building is a detriment
 - Outreach to university students, both those on our doorstep at U of T and our own youth away at university
 - Avoid language that may be alienating
 - Provide volunteer opportunities focused on this group
 - Offer events focused on this demographic

Serve

- **Reaching out to our 'Hood**
 - Meeting the needs of our neighbours – seniors, new condo residents, local businesses, hotels, university students, etc.
- **Lunch Program**
 - Vision/plan for the lunch program going forward is required.
 - Maxed out in terms of resources.
 - What next? Sustain or think of ways to expand?
- **Establish a Centre for Urban Ministry**
 - Meeting the needs of our neighbours
 - Goal is to build community, not convert them