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First Christian Church of Tacoma
Senior Pastor's Report to the Board
May 16, 2017

PROGRESS REPORT OF OUR PROCESS FOR TRANSFORMATION

The following report is based on the vision and goals developed by the Program Committees and Board, in consultation with the Senior Pastor and staff and accepted by acclamation at the July, 2016 Board Meeting.

Every church consultant we've used over the past several years has emphasized the need for a unifying vision to grow the ministry and mission of a church. As one consultant put it in a 2011 report,

Every group needs a vision...if they [sic] are going to move ahead into the future.... [FCC, Tacoma] has not explored the mental maps about contemporary society and spiritual practices. Like many other congregations, it has focused on [and fought over] what would please its membership instead of "what would Jesus have us do in this place with these neighbors.... Participants "light up" when they are talking about "Trunk or Treat" or other ways they have begun to meet their neighbors. If I had to identify this church's passion, it is around engaging neighbors. The church has passion and resources to move towards a great future. It has not identified yet what it needs to be."¹

With that lack of consensus over vision, ministry and mission in mind, we have tried to focus on what we can all affirm about ourselves and our neighbors. To that end, I brought the following to the board last July. This report included the work and insight of our transformation/vision team as well as that of the program committees. I have added a list of accomplishments to date in blue. I know you'll share my enthusiasm for how far we've come, by the grace of God.

As followers of Jesus, we profess the worth and dignity of every person and recognize each one as created in the image of God. We differ from each other and our neighbors in race, age, cultural background, ability, sexual orientation, physical condition, gender identity, family structure, and life circumstances. We even differ in opinion. **But as Christians, we do not differ in our commitment to sharing the unconditional love of God through Christ with all who desire it.** We are also committed to the belief that judging anyone else is not our job. Our job is to praise and proclaim the God who has loved even us and because God has first loved us, we are to love and serve others so that by our words and deeds, we become a sign of that love and a movement for justice in a hurting world.

¹ Hope Partnership Summary—June, 2011

We believe that we have many neighbors who need a community like this and that the world needs communities like this, participating in the Spirit's movement toward completion of the Realm of God. ***Trusting in God, we then commit that by 2020, we shall be a community of faith where all who are able will be in service to the community every day of the week, sharing by our deeds Jesus' commitment to justice, unconditional and extravagant love and a humble walk with God.***

We will accomplish this mission with several deliberate steps.

1. We will continue to strive toward demonstrating the love of God to all in a fragmented world by intentionally training ourselves (and by inviting others to train us) on how to talk lovingly across all our differences: differences of race, age, cultural background, ability, sexual orientation, physical condition, gender identity, family structure, life circumstances and theological and political opinion.

Accomplished to date:

- Several attended an Associated Ministries Conference led by Diana Butler Bass, with a follow-up class taught in the fall of 2012 by the Rev. Chris Morton, using Bass's book, *Christianity After Religion*. This book explores the rapidly changing culture that is increasingly post-Christian.
 - A conversation on Biblical and Historical Roots of Marriage and Human Sexuality, led by Barbara Blaisdell, was held one Sunday after church on 7/19/15.
 - An extended Study of Peter Gomes' *The Good Book*, exploring the way the Bible has been used to address matters facing the American church and culture, including Prohibition, Slavery, Women's Rights, LGBTQ rights, and Anti-Judaism was held using curriculum developed by the Senior Pastor in the Fall, 2015.
 - A study of racism and white privilege using both biblical material and the novel by Jodi Picoult, *small great things* was held in Lent, 2017.
 - There has been a continued emphasis in preaching of why and how to proclaim Jesus's gospel in a fragmented world
2. Because we have been loved despite our faults, we also pledge to not take ourselves too seriously. We don't have all the answers to the world's problems. Sometimes the very best way to love is to have fun with each other and with our neighbors!

Accomplished to date:

- We hold an increasingly well-attended and welcoming coffee hour following worship, allowing the community to catch up with each other and to interact effectively with visitors.
 - Building on the success of Trunk or Treat/ Halloween Party, we've added The Easter Brunch and Songfest which has extended our ministry. The Easter Brunch attracting 160 people.
 - We've begun providing Parent's Night Out opportunities so our young families can get to know each other.
3. We have a valuable piece of property in an area of Tacoma that very much needs a community of faith and service. We consider that property as God's and think this is the corner of Tacoma on which to build future ministry and mission. We are stewards of its best use and we confess that today it is not being used well enough to truly serve our mission in this neighborhood. We will consult with professionals in non-profit law and the field of commercial realty to help us assess the best stewardship of this valuable property. And then we will do what it takes to bring our facilities to the service of that vision in sustainable ways so that our grandchildren's children will continue to have access to a community that seeks to do justice, to love unconditionally, extravagantly and to walk humbly with God.

Accomplished to date:

Over the last 18 months, the Trustees, Senior Pastor and Board Moderator have met with consultants from SCORE (a small business mentoring group) George Osborne of Duninger Corp (a church and non-profit consulting group), John Taylor (architect of TGB architects), Kyle Prosser (a broker), J.J. McCament (realtor), and others. We learned something important from each one. And yet none felt like the right people to give us the expertise we need to make the best use of our resources.

We think we've finally found who we believe we need in Noah Greenberg and Christopher Bell, architects with DLR Group. They have the skills and experience to help us decide how best to use this wonderful corner to best serve the gospel.

4. We won't wait until this has been accomplished to begin. Over this next year we will offer the community our service in concrete ways, including
- Inviting others to use our space, even when we cannot cover our cost for them to do so. (This is not a position that is sustainable long-term. But the problem may be how expensive our property is to maintain. Addressing those issues will allow us to offer space in service to neighbor in more affordable ways.)

- Holding “Yard Un-sale” at which we will clean out our homes of all that distracts and is un-needed. We will then offer to our neighbors the chance to take what they need and to donate what they can to Fish Food Bank.
- Instituting a second Sunday of the month “Noisy Offering,” inviting all in worship to bring their spare change, inviting our children and youth to gather that change in metal containers...making a loud noise in praise of our God and dedicating that offering to service to our neighbors all over the world.
- Providing a worship service on the lawn that blesses pets in honor of St. Francis and of the God who has created all and loves all.
- Providing a summer holiday weekend service outdoors that is “seeker-friendly.”

Accomplishments to date:

- While we lost the nursery school, we have expanded the groups who use our building. Our neighbors have paid a nominal fee to cover our utilities and include 27 groups or individuals.
 - Hope Sparks (Staff meetings & workshops)
 - Northwest Region of the Christian Church (Staff Retreat)
 - Philanthropic Educational Organization
 - Ecumenical Clergy Support Group
 - Monday Gamblers Anonymous
 - Franciscan Hospice (4 different groups)
 - Wilson HS Football Booster
 - South Sound Civil Defense
 - Northwest Mutual Financial Group(Tacoma) Staff Retreats
 - Nantucket West HOA Board meeting
 - Gwinwood Board Meeting
 - Community Connection Place
 - Bells of the Sound
 - Newly Arrived Congolese Welcome Dinners
 - Gamerati: RPG (Roll Playing Game) & board games
 - Several birthday parties, baby showers, weddings and receptions.
- Our Yard Un-sale has become a gift to the neighborhood as well as an effective fund-raiser for our children and youth camping program.
- A committed group from Disciples Women’s Fellowship has effectively run an event in the fall offering free back-to-school haircuts.
- Our Noisy Offering has become a very popular feature of worship every second Sunday of the month. In 2016, we raised \$1839.35 for a variety of ministries beyond our local church. All funds were matched but the funds raised for church camp. In November, the board voted to send the remaining matching funds to our 12 designated mission groups and those

funds, along with our gifts to needy families meant we sent \$27,167.02 to mission and ministry beyond the local church.

- Our pet blessing service and the Labor Day Weekend service celebrating human partnership with God in the creation of beauty in the world have been well received.
5. We will walk humbly with God by continuing to provide meaningful worship that offers an encounter with the living, all-loving God and we will offer that worship both in our sanctuary and beyond it. We will provide radical hospitality in all those services. Hospitality's root meaning is that there can be no difference between host and guest but all shall feel equally "at home."
- Such hospitality includes an openness to a variety of music and our willingness to sing or listen to music that might not be what most speaks to us because we love all the others who are there and so we are willing to sing what speaks to others and conveys God's love to them.
 - Such hospitality includes providing nametags for visitors, regular participants and members alike that do not distinguish or divide us.
 - Such hospitality will include clear signage that allows the first-time visitor to know where to go and directions in worship that clues them in on how best to participate.

Accomplishments to date:

- Our gifted Minister of Music, Ben Smith consistently provides excellent music from a variety of musical traditions and eras, making use of two talented choirs and a variety of guest musicians. Each of us loves some of those choices more than others but we sing joyously the music that may not touch us but does touch another child of God.
 - Some of us have had a hard time letting go of "our nametags" as a sign of pride of membership. I love it that we are proud to be members of the body of Christ. Those symbols, however, make it harder for new people to feel included and they are very expensive and impossible to get in a timely manner.
 - While the small sign showing the map of the campus has helped, we have not found the right vendor to provide clear signs to the ever-present questions of new people, such as: Where are the bathrooms? Which is the Education Wing?
6. We will continue to love one another by providing ever more small group opportunities for spiritual development, for building relationships of unconditional love and for providing opportunities to serve God by serving our neighbors next door and beyond.
- We will provide for youth a mission and camping opportunity every year.

- We will provide families with seasonal opportunities to grow spiritually together, such as Advent, Lenten and Pentecost Festivals of Learning and Service.

Accomplishments to date:

- In the past year, we not only provided a camping experience for several youth, we took a large group with us to Regional Assembly. We do wish we could provide a part time youth minister.
- We have not found the volunteer resources to provide seasonal family learning opportunities.

Timeline: (This timeline is provided to help us remember where we've been and anticipate with excitement where we are going.)

- May 10-12, 2005—Journey of Discovery Visioning Process Begun
- May 31, 2009—All Congregational Meeting held and voted to begin a Capital Campaign for major renovation (Just FYI, we could find no minutes of this meeting. There is a brief announcement of it in the Board Minutes of May 13, 2009.)
- April 3, 2011--All Congregational Meeting held for purpose of considering the proposed capital project for a major renovation. The proposal failed because it did not receive the 66% affirmative vote required by our by-laws.
- May/June, 2011— Consultation and Retreat with Hope Partnership Ministry Planning Assessment/Visioning
- Feb. 2012--John William's resignation
- June 1, 2012--Barbara called as Interim Minister
- October, 2012—All Congregational Meeting with budget challenge and future alternatives presented (#1) and accrued and permanent funds explained (#2) and recommendations made (#3)
- June 2, 2013—Barbara called as Transitional Minister with Privilege of Call
- October, 2013—Extended Congregational meeting with beginning visioning (a session that showed how divided the congregation was in a very visual way)
- June 2, 2014—Barbara called as Senior Pastor
- March 2, 2015—All Congregational Retreat with Dick Hamm
- March 18, 2015--Hamm Contextual Analysis of FCC following Congregational Retreat (#5)
- Summer, 2015--Future Story received and affirmed by board (#6)
- October, 2015--Annual Meeting with further analysis of giving vs. costs, promising congregation that we would seek professional help regarding our options res: stewardship of our assets.
- October, 2016—Annual Meeting at which leadership conveyed difficulty in finding the correct professional guidance but indicated progress with a promise that we would give a late spring, 2017 progress report.

- June 11, 2017—Congregational Meeting for the purpose of meeting our professional partners in determining the best stewardship of our property for ministry and mission.