

Spiritual Discipleship and Missional Engagement Presentation & Responses

MOTION: In a desire to honour God in our mutual ministry as Classis Niagara we commit to encouraging our local ministries to experimenting with new initiatives to

1. develop our engagement in missional ministry and
2. deepening our spiritual discipleship.

Grounds:

1. We have discerned together that missional ministry and spiritual discipleship are growth edges that are reflected in many of our local and shared ministries
2. By committing to working toward these goals at the same time and sharing our stories we maximize potential learning from each other so that we can fulfill God's purpose for us as his church.

Part 1 – PRESENTATIONS: Bethel, Bethany, Bridge, Covenant, Mountainview, Smithville gave presentations on initiatives in their congregations to live into developing missional ministry and deepening spiritual discipleship.

Part 2 – SMALL GROUPS: Delegates were paired with two churches together and responded to the following questions, closing the time together with prayer.

1. What idea or approach intrigued you?

- COS (Community Opportunity Scan)
- Mission in neighbourhood / Go local
- Topic speakers / explain all aspects of society
- Small group great commission (not turning a large ship)
- Go local / release people from ministry / 3DM
- Kids programs community / unity

- Variety/diversity of approaches that work in different contexts
- Encouraged by different stories: teaching congregation to be commissioned in their own areas, learning from others, Bridge meeting needs of marginalized/struggling with homeless

- Being intentional in reaching our neighbours, i.e., having organized events that would pull together people with common interests. Building relationships
- Go local – new ways to reach neighbours

- Smithville – explain service – visitor friendly + Sunday evening – tough topics

- Bridge's experience – focus on "outside" people; "messy" church, long haul
- Prayer to grow; prayer vigils
- Outreaches – food/meals

- Explaining services (to unchurched)
- Different locals – different ideas
- Feel of segregation, wanting to breakdown barriers (Dutch church)
- How do we bring people in or get people to know us
- Mindset of welcoming & making people feel comfortable
- Needs in community
- Liked Fenwick went out into the businesses and to individuals to make relationships (result of COS)
- Possibilities that are open if you are willing (overcoming the fear factor)
- Long term relationship- (5 years before ever mentioning Jesus)
- Actions of kindness- (Fruitland-let someone in an empty house- came to the church as a result)
- The prayer vigil that Mountainview did!

2. What ideas took more than our efforts? What needed God to act to accomplish the idea?

- *Group 1 didn't get to questions 2 or 3*
- A question we wondered about is knowing when to slow down, not try something new, not exhaust resources
- Programs aren't the answer. They can be a means to reach people, but God does the work.
- Unity & Commitment to community – need Holy Spirit!
- Stepping out into community, e.g., Bridge
- Building relationships, love
- Building unity within congregation
- God's leading for church members to join into new efforts/programs
- Everything needs God first!
- Prayer walk – getting people to accept idea, people outside of your core group to encourage you
- Profoundly difficult to reach people who have left church- prayer for the Spirit intercedes- cannot argue someone into the gospel need the Holy Spirit
- Our timing is not God's timing- we need patience.

3. Where do you need God to act in your ministry for there to be transformation in either spiritual discipleship or missional engagement?

- In every area
- Through everything we do! We initiate so much, but in order for transformation, God is acting!
- You can make people DO, but you can't make them CARE. We need to help our people to CARE about our wider community.
- Change outlook to "the" mission of church (not "a" mission)
- Inspire individuals to "change"
- Congregational involvement NOT 20/80
- Challenge congregation to talk to 8 neighbours – open minds
- Faithfulness to God's leading & respond & obedience
- Spirit of God to lead us to faithfully walk through the door
- Fruitland finds a challenge that they do not have a neighbourhood to reach into- there is not so much of a community surrounding them-people do not live in the community, Ebenezer nearest CRC. They are doing a community opportunity scan. Surrounded by 5 aging congregations in Fruitland
- To open the eyes and hearts of the people in the congregation to the needs around them
- To help us want to show the love of Jesus in our communities without the expectation that people come to our church.

PRESENTATIONS

Bethel/Dunnville:

Bethel has been on a journey for 10 yrs now of defining missional opportunities and building spiritual emphasis into all aspects of our ministries. From encouraging a small group sense in our task groups, Praise teams, Elders and Deacons and Administration etc., to releasing folks to serve our 4 community partners. All of these efforts are still "works in progress" but we are seeing the fruit as well.

That is what we intend to share at Classis in Feb.

Keep up the good work

- Pastor Frank

Bethany/Fenwick:

- As to missional activity, the new thing we have started as of 2020 is to do the Diaconal Ministries Canada, Community Opportunity Scan process. With our Deacons leading this alongside our Discipleship Team we will be walking through this process of listening and learning

about the community in which our church building is located. We chose the building as the hub of exploration as our congregation spans 11 communities (a commuter church). To my knowledge, Bethany has never done this before. There is a core of people interested and willing to be a part of this. Probably biggest challenge from the start is communicating this to the congregation so that they start to understand what is being talked about. We have coaching from DMC who has been on site here and continues to walk this path with us.

- As to the spiritual formation part, we have not started anything really new as yet on a congregational level. However we have this church year begun a Jr. Youth teaching time one week a month for each grade during the morning service. That has been well received so far. We do have 2 people volunteering as Ministry Coordinators who are working to deepen the steps of our ministry vision we developed a few years back (Everyone Growing in Jesus: Deep Connecting, Lifelong Equipping, Compassionate Serving). This has been slower going, as it is so easy for people to return to same old, same old. We are also, as an outflow of the visioning process we did, developing a proposal for a building renovation/expansion. We are hard pressed with respect to classroom space, fellowship space, and any community activity space.
- Pastor Colin

Smithville:

- We have stepped out this Fall in making our facility available to host the community-wide "Loaf of Bread" ... joining in with other local churches to provide a Thursday night opportunity for anyone in the community to receive a free warm home cooked meal - and benefit from the social engagement as well. We didn't know if we could pull it off for 9 weeks in a row, but God provided the hospitality supports we needed, and it was a great way for us to engage with some in our community. Since then, 2-3 individuals have continued to engage with us - attending worship, Coffee Break, and getting to know people from our faith community.
- Our vision team saw the value helping our community engage with some relevant topics of our culture, and presently we're promoting 4 evenings on topics including human trafficking, alcohol and drug addition, pornography, and mental health... We are praying that many will engage - and trying to show our community that we/God cares about these things...and about people.
- God has been bringing new people to us, and we're trying to be very intentional in connecting with them - plugging them in relationally somewhere.
- We look forward in growing with our partnership with Terence & Karen (Thorold Expression)
-- Pastor Peter