

HIGHLAND HILLS UNITED CHURCH – VISIONING #2
ZION UNITED CHURCH – MAY 13, 2017
FACILITATOR – BOB ROOT

WELCOME:

Lois Deacon welcomed the group and gave us a brief reminder of why we were pursuing amalgamation + shared the” 3-legged stool” ...people 1st/buildings 2nd ...cost savings...& hope, joy, & faith for the future.

WORSHIP:

Bob Root created a worship center that encompassed Acknowledgement of the Land & Candle Lighting.

Hymn: “Create Us New”
Prayer

Silent Reflection:

What does it mean to be made new? What does it mean for a church to be made new? What is God calling the new church to be? What can we take with us from the past? What do we need to leave behind in order to make room for the new?

SCRIPTURE:

(Dramatic sketch, based on Matthew 16: 18 – 19, presented by Bob Root & Debbie Sherwin)

“And I say to you: You are Peter, the Rock; and on this rock I will build my church...”

Each of us is Peter, trying to be the hands & feet of God. There is an ongoing call to listen and discern, and we need to trust that God is with us on this journey.

Hymn: “Behold, Behold, I Make All Things New”

Bob reviewed our congregational process thus far, including having a new name and a new governance structure. He commended us for having the courageous conversations, and empowered us to “keep on keeping on.” There was also an acknowledgement of the support and resources provided by Presbytery & Conference to work towards this shared ministry initiative.

GROUND RULES:

1. All ideas are welcome.
2. “We have never done it this way before.” is not allowed!
3. This is a serious undertaking, but God likes laughter and humour.

VISION & MISSION STATEMENTS:

Bob read them aloud, and then gave us guiding questions to consider in our small and large group discussions:

What speaks to us? Where's the energy? Where is there no energy? What do you think God thinks?

There was a lot of energy in the room, as the discussions ensued. Comments included: **Are we really an “exclusive club”? “We” vs “They”...How do we become “Us”? How is our connection to Christ and each other manifested? How can we do a better job of looking outward & of breaking down barriers? Are we pushing God/religion into people's faces before acceptance? How do we welcome people and let them know who we are...and then get them in the door... or, do we go to them?**

THREE COMMON ELEMENTS/THEMES EMERGED:

1. Caring for All (including affirming)
2. Connection (It's what we are about...supporting those in need.)
3. Community

Bob was pleased to hear how visible these statements are in our pastoral charge. (eg. Zion's is above the church door; originally read at each council meeting; unison reading once/month during worship; printed in bulletins, on website, and on Minden's electronic sign.)

WORLD CAFÉ:

This interactive exercise saw us participate in three, 20-minute sessions, where we then moved to different tables and continued the conversation with different people.

“We are wiser together than being alone.” Bob encouraged us to use **“radiant”** words, to **dream wildly**, and to **be a church with pizzazz!**

VISION QUESTIONS: (to guide the conversations)

1. What is church for?
2. What kind of church are we going to be?
3. What would you like to see?
4. What do I need to feel connected to the church?
5. Why do I belong to this community of faith/keep coming back?
6. What kind of church is needed in the communities in which we live?

A. WORSHIP:

- **Creative**
- **Engaging**
- **Thought-provoking**
- **Inclusive language**
- **Dive deeper into profundity of life (ie. What's at the heart of who we are? What does it mean to be alive? How do we deal with pain & suffering in this day and age?)**
- **“ripple effect”...starts with us & moves us OUTWARD, galvanizing us into ACTION**
- **Get real (ie. reflective of community-at-large, which is relatively unchurched & biblically illiterate)**
- **Tradition/ritual is comforting & part of our history...How do we meld this into the new?**

B. PASTORAL CARE:

- **Welcoming/Hospitable**
- **Connection**
- **Common Values**
- **People/Friendships (many congregants belong to different community organizations, but friendships are different at church. When pressed to determine the difference, it was described as more authentic...that church people focus on you.)**
- **“It's when you get in a mess, is when you really need your church.”**
- **The community-at-large needs what we have, but we can't seem to get past the negative connotation of “church/God/religion.”**

C. OUTREACH:

- **Called to selfless service**
- **Service/Mission (put resources out into community)**
- **Ecumenical partnerships/activities**
- **Develop Community Partnerships/Continue to Support Existing Programs (eg. Food Bank) rather than duplication & re-inventing the wheel**
- **Focus on senior's needs (aging/grief/loss/loneliness)**
- **Lunch & Learn series**

- **Engage Face-to-Face with community members...Listen Deeply to the stories of pain and loss. Ask “What can we do for you? What do you need from us? Collaborate on the action.**

Lunch was provided by the ladies of Zion & Minden United Churches.

COMMON THEMES/CATEGORIES: (from World Cafe)

1. THE CHURCH:

- **What’s church for?**
- **Why do I belong? Keep coming back?**
- **How do we create a culture that invites others? That people want to be part of?**

2. WORSHIP:

- **Worship is the key piece. It gives us life to go out and live life fully.**
- **Don’t apologize for our Christian upbringing.**
- **Energy exists for exploring new forms of worship. (While ritual is familiar, encourage people to stay open... Use a 6-week trial & error, constantly tweaking. You’ll come to know what the “bottom line” is...ie. What you can’t mess with!)**
- **Be flexible**
- **Wear nametags (Have a creative session where people make their own nametags that reflect who they are...good conversation starter when meeting someone new.)**
- **Greeting Time...intentionally talk to someone you don’t know.**
- **Add an extra service (eg. Celtic worship/meditation/labyrinth)**
- **Involve more people in the service/ Increase # voices heard**
- **Themed services/Sermon Series**
- **Try some new things/find new ways of doing things (eg. Dinner & worship midweek, Easter Sunday Bonspiel, take church into the community)**
- **Use Zion’s monthly candle lighting liturgy (joys/concerns)**
- **Music is important...when we sing together, we pray twice.**
- **Contemporary Wisdom (explore wisdom of different religions)**
- **“We” vs “They” > “ALL” (We have to bring everybody to Jesus = God’s work. We exist to be the hands & feet of God. It takes **COURAGE** to **LOOK OUTWARDS**.)**
- **ENGAGE & LISTEN DEEPLY to the stories of pain & loss (members/adherents; church in decline; health; life circumstances) This is a shift in the church vs “they’ll come, because they know we’re here. Avoid making assumptions about what we**

think “they” need...a story was shared of someone who donated a turkey, but the recipient didn’t have an oven!

- What are we willing to do to take a risk?

3. PASTORAL CARE:

- More and more is being done by the congregation/lay people. Establish a pastoral care team that works with Max & communicates who needs a visit.
- Need more face-to-face pastoral visits in community
- New focus to provide basic needs
- Explore models of Pastoral Charge Elders & Stephen Ministry
- Paired visiting (2 by 2)
- Dependency Syndrome (Poverty/Under- & Unemployed can lead to a generational cycle) Being involved may affect the dynamics of community. Are we willing to take the risk?

4. OUTREACH:

- Support those in need/Prioritize needs with available resources
- Contact/Follow-up with members & adherents who haven’t been attending
- Access students as resource (community service hours/government grants to hire summer students)
- Develop partnerships (including ecumenical partnerships)
- Support existing community efforts (eg. Food Bank)
- Provide “non churchy” activities (eg. Enviro-Café)
- (Note that Pastoral Care & Outreach often overlap.)

FACILITIES:

What facilities do we need to achieve our mission?

If we are encouraging the community to use our church, what kind of facility is needed to invite others in?

- Accessibility (mobility + hearing assistive devices) Be aware that accessibility can also include being an affirming church; using inclusive language; & honouring food & allergy sensitivities. (ie. scent-free environment; diabetic, gluten-free, vegetarian/vegan options at church meetings, suppers, & worship (gluten-free communion).)

- Large kitchen
- Communal space
- Meeting rooms for small & large-group sessions
- Space for Knitters, and Spinners & Weavers (including storage for supplies)
- Minister's study (private/separate from office)
- Storage space (chairs, tables, decorations, paper supplies, Christian Education resources & supplies)
- Book display/Library
- Good acoustics
- Screen (power point, film nights)
- Stage (for community performances)
- Community Garden to support Food Bank
- Parking
- Do we use a traditional church building, with on-going upkeep & maintenance costs? Rent a storefront or space in a school, with a non churchy feeling, with moveable chairs for worship & other functions & known expenses each month? Build/Rent a multi-purpose centre?

WORDS OF ADVICE/GRATITUDE for INTEGRATION COMMITTEE:

- Appreciate your leadership & commitment
- Grateful for the energy being created
- Grateful for the empathy you are showing during this transition
- Communication is key
- Maintain a sense of humour
- Don't worry about the roadblocks...Keep on keeping on!
- Ask for what you need along the way

Lois encouraged us to tell them what they are missing...Have you thought about _____? She also reminded us that Maple Lake is part of our church family, and wonders where it fits in all of this. And, she invited anyone wishing to serve on the Visioning Committee to speak with her. This is a subcommittee of the Integration Committee.

CONGREGATION QUESTIONS:

Lois reminded us that the amalgamation target date is still January 1, 2018 but that the building piece may NOT be decided by this date. We may need to use our buildings, alternately for a time, but keeping in mind that we are trying to keep our overhead costs down. The draft report from the Building Assessment Committee is expected in June 2017 re: recommendations needed for our facility + accessibility costs.

Janet Heffer gave a worship committee update: Starting in the fall 2017, Joint Services will be held on the 1st and 3rd Sundays, with Maple Lake having its own service on the 3rd Sunday. Service times & Musicians are currently being explored.

The visioning session ended with a prayer and the final hymn “Let Us Build a House”.