

Philosophy of Ministry and Vision Statement
FCC Colorado Springs
June 30, 2008

Introduction

Following a fifteen year pastorate and the first six months of an intentional interim, the congregation, under the leadership of the Board of Elders undertook a six-week congregation-wide study of Dick Hamm's book Recreating the Church. The Sunday evening sessions were facilitated by various leaders from within the region. The final session was conducted by Dr. Hamm.

Following this work, the congregation became aware of the need for change in order to move forward in mission and ministry and that such changes will require significant commitment and hard work by all involved.

The Vision Team (VT) was appointed to discern, define and clarify the direction of ministry and mission for our church. This vision statement also impacts the qualities and skills we seek in a new minister.

To carry out the assignment the VT studied, reviewed, and discussed:

Dick Hamm's 20/20 Vision

Christian Schwarz's Natural Church Development:

A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches. (NCD)

The VT then administered the NCD Congregation Assessment Tool to representative congregants.

Observations

After reviewing and analyzing the results of the assessment, the VT now presents the following observations. We are a congregation with strong, caring personal relationships and numerous small group activities. However, we are also a church in search of a meaningful spiritual life. (Dr. Hamm speaks of Deep Christian Spirituality NCD uses the term Passionate Spirituality)

The church's recent efforts have sought membership growth through program development. We placed our faith in programs. Believing that if we had the right curriculum for education, brought in the right consultant or focused on the right target demographic our membership would increase. We have sought growth in faith by right actions.

Recommendations

The VT recommends a shift in direction. The church needs to focus on personal and congregational spiritual and faith development. We believe these characteristics are key factors in personal and congregational revitalization.

Renewed vitality must begin with:

- Growth in spirit - our emotional connectedness to God through Christ.
- Growth in faith - a deeper understanding and knowledge of Christ.
- Growth in knowledge of the traditions and practices of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- We believe growth in spirit and faith will then provide the foundation for growth in actions and behaviors.
- We believe growth in spirit and in faith will allow us to be/become a congregation where voicing a diversity of opinions is expected and respected.
- We believe growth in spirit and faith will allow us to be bold in the name of Christ, passionate and extravagant risk-takers.

NCD Assessment

Based on our study and the NCD Congregational Assessment Tool, the VT sees the following needs:

Spiritual and Faith Development

Understanding the culture changes of the last forty years we know that many persons come to us with no church background and little or no knowledge of Christianity.

First Christian Church needs a solid cradle-to-12th grade education program.

In the adult education area we need to provide comprehensive opportunities for both faith and spiritual development. We need to provide for people who are new to the faith, who wish to grow in their faith and for those who wish to be challenged in their faith.

This is far more than Sunday morning Sunday school. These educational opportunities must be offered in a variety of times, places and formats. We must provide educational opportunities for those with a variety of learning styles and commitments.

Revitalized Worship

Our worship experiences have been “performance based”: leaders lead (very professionally) and the congregation is an audience for the performance. This has been evaluated through the NCD Assessment Tool as generally less than spiritually moving for our congregation. Our worship goal is an empowering, celebratory, spiritually inspiring and life-transforming experience. We seek to have more participatory and engaging worship. Our worship services shall move toward lay congregational leadership and engagement.

Natural Growth in Service and Mission

As we grow in faith and spirit, we expect that there will be a natural desire to grow in service and mission. As members’ faith grows, we must be attentive to their desires to serve. Leadership must be both visionary and empowered in this attentiveness. Having identified spiritual gifts, persons growing in faith and faithfulness should have opportunities to act out their gifts in joyful Christian service.

Implications for the Congregation

- We seek to be a congregation where spiritual growth is the norm.
- We seek to be a congregation where growing in faith is expected.
- Solid knowledge of our own faith foundations will allow us to be a community of faith that expects and respects a diversity of opinion, in the best of Disciples of Christ tradition.
- We will be a community of faith, radical in hospitality, outrageous in generosity and joyful in service to God and neighbor.
- Congregational leaders will be collaborative and collegial visionaries, motivators and mentors.

General Assumptions about Pastoral Leadership

- Our new Senior Pastor will lead with vision and imagination.
- We seek a Senior Pastor who will serve and lead as a mentor and motivator.
- A collaborative leadership style will allow the Senior Pastor to focus on congregational development and leadership empowerment.
- The Senior Pastor must possess experience in (or high potential for) the administrative responsibilities of a downtown congregation of our size and sophistication
- The congregational commitment is to an empowering leadership style using the gifts and significant abilities of the participants.
- The Senior Pastor candidate must be prepared for serving as head of the staff, within a collaborative leadership style, for both staff and lay leadership.

Specific Implications for Pastoral Leadership

The Senior Pastor candidate must possess a deep Christian spirituality. The key issue is that the Senior Pastor candidate be a person of demonstrated spiritual depth with the gifts and passion for encouraging both personal and corporate spiritual growth within our multi-generational congregation.

The Senior Pastor candidate must be knowledgeable of and committed to broad-based faith and spiritual development.

The Senior Pastor candidate must possess solid preaching skills that will engage, inspire and motivate congregants to grow in their faith and spirituality.

The Future

In our current situation evangelism is scary for us. We understand that as our depth of spirit grows, our desire and ability to share the faith will also grow. Individually, and as a congregation, we seek to share the good news with those yet to be identified.

Our congregation will grow as our personal and congregational spiritual vitality grows. Pastoral leadership must possess an intuitive sense to see and create bold, imaginative and innovative opportunities to increase mission, ministry and service to our local and greater communities.