

Vibrant Together Conversations

August 21, 2021

Do you agree that the current vision of the Presbytery is beneficial? Why or why not?

COMMENTS:

- Helpful, positive, and gives focus and guidance - particularly helpful during the covid pandemic.
- Appreciation for Darius' direction which was especially good during covid.
- We saw different forms and ways of worship. Sharing information between churches is very helpful.
- Great to see how other congregations are creatively worshiping and the ability to learn from other congregations.
- Helpful to understand the focus on leadership and what that means. Helped to develop leadership.
- Plan and framework helps churches stay focused on betterment for their church.
- Vision is holistic and taps into what we need to be focused on in our relationship with Jesus. Well rounded.
- Keeps churches focused with a better direction to look outside the immediate needs of the church. Since we tend to focus on emergencies, important elements of church development are not handled unless programs such as this are implemented.
- A plan is critical to help churches address important issues. Doing it together opens the thought process and helps everyone think outside the box.
- The process and vision was VERY helpful. It had been historically missing. Now churches had direction, connection as a community and support.
- The 5 items previous identified are PERFECT and take us into the future beautifully.
- Tuesdays Together is critical to help continue this mission!
- Vision can be articulated regardless of congregation.
- Anyone actively involved in Presbytery can state it and flesh out the pieces. Helpful on congregational level too.
- Likes that started and ended with clarity of identity.
- All of the things we have listed are important. Whether a congregation has done more or less isn't clear but presbytery has provided resources and leadership.
- All important and like the cyclical piece. Tuesdays together have demonstrated need for continued conversation.
- For a long time previously the presbytery was to tell what we could and could not do. That has changed to vibrance. This has helped to guide our conversations as a church.
- The church had lost connection with presbytery and now has connection. The presbytery is no longer considered an "other", but a part of who we are. Positive movement.
- At our church, we feel like we are on the outside looking in. We have not been a party to a lot of what has happened — we are not fully involved engaged, but we would like to be The presbytery doesn't seem to be addressing small churches as this plan seems to be geared towards big churches. We are in survival mode. Smaller churches need help.
- We considered ourselves vibrant before — our presbytery has gone through a lot. I like some changes, but not all. I critique first and foremost and appreciate when there are specifics to

Vibrant Together Conversations

August 21, 2021

follow like Matthew 25. Become on-fire for an issue to help your community. I think that's what vibrant is all about and you should too.

- Pandemic made us focus on other issues did not have time to deal with the Plan.
- Some churches have been able to work on this, others not because of the pandemic.
- I think the plan is a good plan.
- Provides directions and focus.
- Vibrancy is a nice word.
- Gave context to the Presbytery as whole.
- Helped congregations develop a meaningful plan.
- Gave pastors an accountability to implement (valuable).
- Help new leaders have guidance going forward as we transition to new leaders.
- It gave a voice to those of us that have not had a voice (in reconciliation specifically)
- The mission statement is viable, and it is something we can "hang meat on in the skeleton" of this Presbytery.
- Some feel there should be more focus on certain areas like Reconciliation.
- Smaller group work for leadership development could help. Maybe by region. How do we move these things forward? How to get deeper. 20 mins at PTF meeting doesn't get us there.
- We should continue building on the 5 Marks of Vibrancy.
- Program good. Conversations like this are more fruitful. Builds trust on the program. Program still has value.
- Plan is good. All points are important. Implementing needs to filter to local churches.
- Key word is VIBRANT.
- Small churches are having a hard time but believe in the presbytery mission.
- Building relationships in the local communities is vital.
- Beautiful mission statement.
- Church is organic and ever growing and changing .

SUGGESTIONS:

- Vision is beneficial – the 5 markers are all important, but it is perhaps a little too broad - needs refinement.
- Provide a way for churches to talk to each other
- Relook and redesign how we envision worship due to the pandemic and the millennials.
- These points are valid and maybe haven't been able to cover them. Think of as a cyclical exercise.
- Focus on reaching out to non-communicative churches.
- Give ways that we can encourage other's needs, to be more intentional.
- The Presbytery should provide ideas from other churches, provide exercises to help us connect the dots.
- Need help with building relationships.
- Vibrancy needs to be real.
- We need to be intentional and not just look good on paper.

Vibrant Together Conversations

August 21, 2021

As you consider the 5 Marks of Vibrancy, looking back over the last 2.5 years, which of these helped you or your church the most? Why was this so?

HELPED MOST	GROUP ONE	GROUP TWO	GROUP THREE	GROUP FOUR	GROUP FIVE	GROUP SIX	GROUP SEVEN	TOTAL
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	0	0	5	5	0	0	4	14
DISCIPLE MAKING	0	0	4	0	5	4	0	13
VITAL WORSHIP	0	5	0	5	4	5	4	23
RECONCILIATION	0	0	4	3	0	4	5	16
CLARITY OF IDENTITY	5	0	0	4	3	4	5	21

COMMENTS:

- Leadership Development
 - Helped people let go of old notions.
 - Changes us in building new way to be the church.
 - Clarity of Identity was the initial focus. We felt like the independent church was going in the right path with Presbytery. This was a comforting thought.
 - With pandemic and small church, several new people stepped up in leadership role. Recalls when Daris first came and we started this process. Can see a change in presby.
 - So many ways to go that we had to come up with new skills (IT, community outreach), being vibrant. Gave us a chance to step forward. Tuesdays together has been a Godsend. Share ideas.
 - Since online, the younger members had to get involved to get the service up on line. Happened at other churches too
- Disciple-making
 - Important as it relates to the need for online worship and technology.
 - Disciple making has strengthened the idea of it.
 - We began an online disciple making group that meets midweek.
- Vital Worship
 - Important as churches had to re-think how to worship and to reach out to the community through online worship.
 - Helped people let go of old notions.
 - Pandemic changed the worship. It forced churches to clarify who they are and why.
 - Worship is central event of the week, worship becoming defused due to covid, looked into principles of vibrancy. Worship should be most important but shifted from in person –to those not present.
 - Disciple Making is the most pivotal because it is the “why” of what we should be doing to be more Christ-like.

Vibrant Together Conversations

August 21, 2021

- Had to find new ways to worship due to COVID. Out of state, former members are able to join.
- Had to reevaluate worship style and online has been able to get better. Churches not online have learned how to adapt.
- We went to YouTube. Getting more people watching at different times.
- We have been working on our vital worship with purchases of equipment and outreach as to how to meet online.
- Key at this current time.
- Via zoom we have been able to gather for events on reconciliation.
- Vital worship looks different due to the pandemic and physical presence not being available.
- All agreed worship must be vital.
- Reconciliation
 - Hardest has been reconciliation because of the separation of the pandemic. We have encouraged members to come out of the closet. We lost people but also gained people.
 - Want to be open to more people of color – get us off our Lilly Pad. Need to be less white.
 - Reconciliation underscored that the church’s responsibility is beyond just learning the word. As a congregation, it is our job to work for justice and confront difficult issues.
 - It is the basis of everything. That’s why we have Prayer of Confession every time we worship. Can’t do the rest without reconciliation.
 - Reconciliation has been extremely important for the session in discussing why the church is the way it is and why the church acts as it does.
 - Via zoom we have been able to gather for events on reconciliation.
- Clarity of Identity
 - Thought to be helpful.
 - Asked what the identity is of our community and surrounding neighbors. And when we know that we can become a meaningful church in our community. We need to know who we are as a church, but it will not matter if that identity does not match or engage with the community around us.
 - It’s important to know who we are.
 - Leads to an understanding of others.
 - Deciding who you are is based on where you are.
 - Each church must determine their identity before taking the next steps - the other four principles follow from there.
 - We can be mired in the past.
 - Always grow in Clarity of Identify since that will adjust as the church grows in its relationship with God and each other.
 - Part One was most helpful because it set the strategic plan in motion for our congregation. Church did a book study on Quietly Courageous, including what our niche was, who is our church, etc. Made a big shift in the church.
 - Some churches are looking for identity in their community.
 - Churches are forming new identities due to digital.

Vibrant Together Conversations

August 21, 2021

Which of the 5 Marks of Vibrancy do you think needs the most emphasis going forward? Why?

NEED MORE HELP	GROUP ONE	GROUP TWO	GROUP THREE	GROUP FOUR	GROUP FIVE	GROUP SIX	GROUP SEVEN	TOTAL
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	0	4	5	2	5	0	5	21
DISCIPLE MAKING	0	3	0	1	0	5	0	9
VITAL WORSHIP	5	5	0	2	0	0	3	15
RECONCILIATION	0	0	0	5	3	0	4	12
CLARITY OF IDENTITY	5	0	0	1	4	0	3	13

COMMENTS:

- Leadership Development
 - Developing new leaders in the younger age group and focusing on not only the pastor but the congregation.
 - Many pastors need help on how to lead during these changing times.
 - If people have been chosen, there is a reason why...we can learn and teach each other how to be leaders.
 - We should focus on leadership development in our congregation. Most of our people are elderly. "I can get people to help, but not champion." Struggling with fellowship – drive-bys, Sundaes drive by on Sundays, but we are still trying to survive.
 - Take steps in supporting ministers, that's what volunteers need to do. Our church is mostly volunteer work. Budgets are tight, better to get volunteers.
 - Clarity of Identity is most important. The feeling is a lot of our churches don't know why they exist, and it is important to determine each church's purpose.
 - It's important to not pretend but be realistic as to what things are in each church. Understand "Why we exist."
 - Need to address churches that are not performing as churches (not vibrant, not leading, not missional) earlier. Clarity of Identify and the church's ability to function properly should be address timely, and not wait until the church is on life-supports.
 - We are good in our heads but the leaders need to live it out.
 - We need more leaders. Feels like same couple of people do everything.
 - Some churches are worried about the lack of leadership from their congregation.
- Disciple-making
 - Need more emphasis on Bible study, hard to get 1 hour commitment from folks, worked better on campus.
 - One of the areas as we go outside of our comfort zones, active evangelism is hard. We don't put enough emphasis on our sacraments like adult baptisms.

Vibrant Together Conversations

August 21, 2021

- Likes the 2 min prayer discipline.
- We focus on disciple-making as a church, so we would like to see more emphasis on that in the future.
- We have a very diverse congregation and realize that people were taking it on themselves as to how to make disciples, so out of the vital worship, we are attempting to coordinate efforts to be of one mind.
- Discipleship is key within us before we can engage with others in creating discipleship.
- I don't see a lot of deep spirituality within some of our members - I feel they are more interested in doing the social justice. I like to see how roots growing deeper in personal spirituality.
- Focus – Dedication – Strong Purpose – in helping Disciple Making as honoring God.
- The Book of Confessions is a great idea to help with disciple making.
- Vital Worship
 - Vital worship is big for the coming year or two because of the pandemic: moving worship online.
 - We have to keep trying different things.
 - Meeting on Youtube, means something is seriously missing. Not sure of solution until pandemic subsides, even then hard time because sense of community has been damaged, big problem we have.
 - Some people have chosen to move closer to family, coming back to a church that looks a bit different than the one we left 1 ½ year ago. Some have found other on-line churches, many changes.
 - People don't want to commit to be somewhere at 11 a.m..... it's not like it used to be. Even before covid "we" were going through the wilderness. But we can also reach people we couldn't reach before and we have a good YouTube service. We're back in person, but requiring masks and keeping their distance.
 - Covid has made us change worship, and I'm tired of it. We are doing more than we ever did, but still some people aren't happy.
 - Hoping we are not going back to not-in-person in next week's session. We had 45 people meet outside and the same indoors. Can't identify who is actually watching, still in transition stage, still taping service, learning curve, mostly volunteers.
 - Lost congregation when had to close. But when came back, most agreed to come back to the church service. Zooming wasn't enough, needed in person.
 - We did the daily prayer, we didn't participate in the bible studies, the pandemic I think redirected our focus to other areas.
 - Reconciliation needs to be more of a focus as we move forward as to reconciliation as a Presbytery as a whole. Feel that as whole the Presbytery needs to work together on this.
- Reconciliation
 - Addressing difficult issues (i.e. climate change effects, covid) and the need to build relationships within and outside the individual churches.
 - Hard to move to Reconciliation. Hard to let go of anything. Covid helped us reach out.
 - We are a social justice church and want to figure out how to make this more PTF wide.

Vibrant Together Conversations

August 21, 2021

- As far as presbytery, good emphasis on Recon but doesn't filter down to the congregations. Reconciliation is something that people shy away from. Need to education people on this esp. in today's world. Could all use more education on this. Hopefully would lead into more disciple making and give a way to reach out.
- We lack the bridge building. We need leaders to show what recon looks like.
- With all the fights over masks, etc., we need to be more active.
- We are good at conceptualizing and explaining but hard for us to put in practice. See how much they love each other. This is the base for growing the church.
- More social justice focus for the Presbytery as a whole is needed.
- How to go about it? Can the Presbytery provide us with ideas?
- Reconciliation is so very important as the world is angry and tense.
- People feel they need to win arguments instead of working together.
- Leaders can be developed through reconciliation.
- "They will know we are Christians by our love."
- Reconciliation and clarity of identity go hand-in-hand.
- Clarity of Identity
 - Important as we adapt to new realities.
 - After 2.5 years some of our smaller congregations need to get more of a sense of our identity. It's changed over this time. Will be hard to do since still in pandemic. Come together on Sundays and have session meetings but are just trying to hold things together. Need to sit down and rethink our vision and future.
 - We must put forth that we are a Christ centered community.

Vibrant Together Conversations

August 21, 2021

If you were to iterate on the current ministry plan, what would you add and/or erase given the vision of the Presbytery?

ADD:

- We [still] have questions: How does that apply to our community? What do these marks look like on the ground? Does presbytery know how many churches have bought in?
- Leadership Development with young people in congregations
- Presbytery to respond with compassion when speaking the truth to congregations
- Increase opportunities for bringing together the Presbytery and churches (i.e. grants/communication)
- Strengthen the relationships between the churches and Presbytery and the world. This was also raised due to issues between some local churches and the Presbytery.
- It is hard to move the PTF's ideas out from the Pastor – in our church we still do not know who we are. This program does not filter out past just a few people.
- Needs to be Presbytery wide – work with other Presbyteries in programs to know what they are doing (?)
- Equip pastors – how to take the message to their congregations
- Tap into youth for help with tech questions and taping and AV and live-streaming. We are able to track who is watching. Viewership increases throughout the week. Also thought of tapping into local colleges as an internship.
- Digital Expertise - used an email through “Constant contact.” It will tell you who opened the email and how often they opened it. Volunteers doing and learning an awful lot, because church is important to them.
- Difficult to answer each question, because the presbytery vision is good, but for the future we need to do something according to the congregations development. The pandemic changed many things. There is so much political and cultural confrontation in our lives today. Our congregations needs so many changes.
- Small church has an extra layer of challenges added to them during the pandemic when paying the electric bill requires social focus. Joint special services with other churches would be helpful to have added.
- This is a good question for bringing the congregations into the conversation.
- no revision is needed just intentional implication by all

CHANGE:

- Churches should not depend too heavily on the Presbytery as it is a small office caring for the needs of 42 churches.
- Leadership/Reconciliation/Vital Worship/Clarity = if these are all working then Disciple making will be an outcrop of that work.
- Most emphasis needed going forward is the issue of working with the elderly. Mail-outs to elderly @ 40 every week with news, pastor's sermon, etc.
- There needs to be deeper dives, affinity groups (like hunger, education, etc) There needs to be a hard look at whether we have the right churches. Are we paying the pastors enough?

Vibrant Together Conversations

August 21, 2021

- De-emphasize: Disciple Making: active evangelism/ frequent adult baptisms – evangelism is understood as outreach, people are resistant to actual evangelism. Better to put less emphasis on that and more on the other points.