

## Visioning at Christ Church – Week 3

### March 14 – Growing together as a community

34 in person; 5 zoom connections.

#### Opening:

This week Jody Clarke opened our visioning gathering with a reflective commentary on the importance, challenges and possibilities related to the process and the promise of the future.

#### Setting up what the congregational survey said on how we feel about ourselves as a community:

John MacDonald drew on his corporate experience with the Enterprise car rental organization where consumer satisfaction was a central corporate theme. Customers, and church goers, have some shared expectations that drive their satisfaction with the experience. While the specifics may differ, the basics are comparable. Enterprise achieved an 85% net promoter score - a measurement of satisfaction based on the difference between the percentage of people with good experiences and planning to return, and those with bad experiences.

Our net promoter score was much lower. Even with including the fence sitters, who sort of thought the experience was OK, our score was about 50 percent.

J Russel Crabtree, the founder and former owner of Holy Cow Consulting, the company which led our survey, has identified characteristics of successful episcopal churches in relation to the perceptions of congregations and their satisfaction. John MacDonald, who was celebrating his birthday, reviewed these

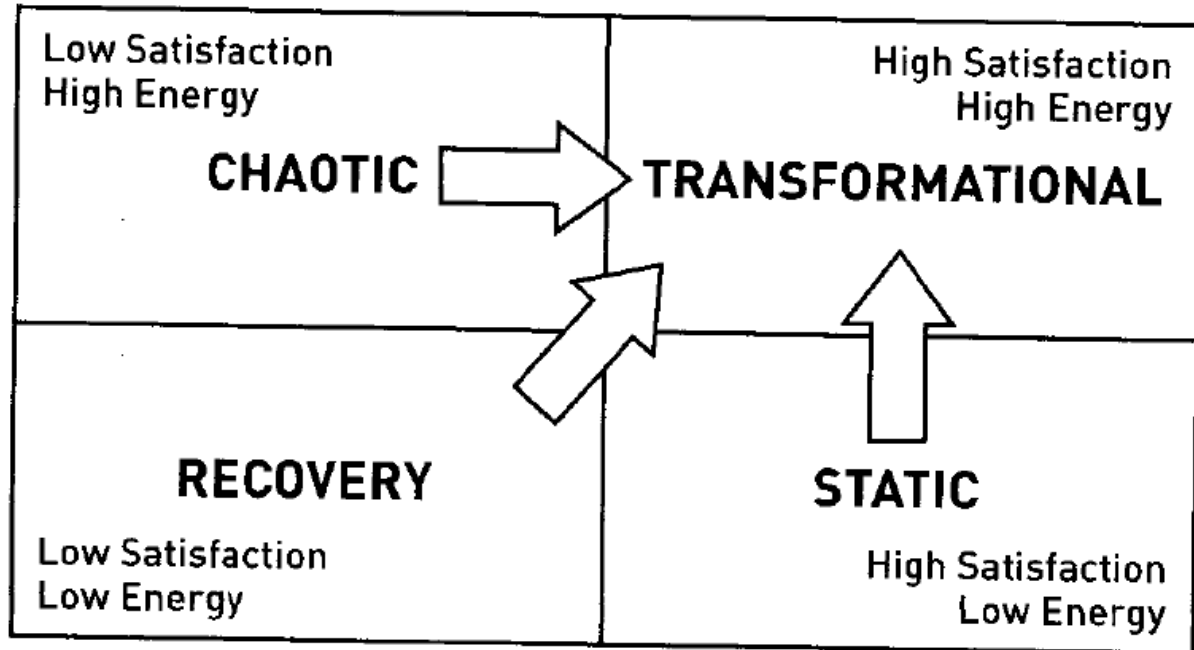
1. The worship experience inspires, engages and enriches.
2. Involvement in the life of the church is good for one's soul and does not cause disillusionment and disappointment.
3. The church has programs and activities meeting individual needs at all points in one's life cycle.
4. The congregation as a group is peaceful in their interactions. While agreement may not happen, differing views are encountered with open ears and respect.
5. The church leadership listens and can make courageous decisions with good intentions.

#### Energy and Satisfaction at Christ Church

	On the questions that addressed satisfaction with the Christ Church experience	On the questions about energy or engagement at Christ Church:
Satisfied / we have it	34%	25%

Sort of Satisfied / sort of engaged or feeling it	48%	45%
Not satisfied / not feeling it	30%	30%

A matrix displaying satisfaction and energy in 4 quadrants was displayed.



We are in recovery with Low Satisfaction and Low Energy. The way out and towards the transformational stage of higher satisfaction and higher energy is to:

- Clarify purpose,
- shift to external focus
- Tactical flexibility,
- look at what is working elsewhere,
- embrace strategic and tactical resources to jump start a turn around
- Strategy – equip leaders, and emphasize spiritual formation
- Do a few things really well before moving on to others?
- Embrace the Journey!

Our answers to questions in which the survey indicated we are not doing well touched these topics related to satisfaction. **Remember these are things we identified where we can improve.**

- In important decisions adequate opportunity is provided for consideration of different approaches
- Our pastor helps us accomplish our mission by bringing out the best in everyone.
- Our church does a good job of supporting persons in their ministries
- Our leaders listen to all when decisions need to be made

- Our leadership is representative of everyone.

Our answers to questions in which the survey indicated we are not doing well touched these topics related to energy. **Remember these are things we identified where we can improve.**

- The spirit of the congregation promotes active involvement
- Church opportunities respond to my needs and schedule
- We are tolerant of different opinions and beliefs
- We have offerings for people at every stage and age of life
- Our church does a good job of supporting persons in their ministries by recognizing their contribution.

### **Jody then invited discussion why our spirit doesn't promote active involvement.**

- A person related that although her children grew up with a collared grandfather who they adored and loved, her children no longer connect to church. In pursuing this with them she discovered they characterised their attendance experiences as the constant lecture about sin and a depressing experience. Another person responded that she has little recollection of sin being a topic for sermons – there seemed to be a disconnect between the experience and the memory of the experience. It was suggested that we should listen to what people are hearing at our services to discover what messages are making it through.
- Another person responded that everyday relevance was important to what we increasingly are referencing as the youthful generation of Christ Church who no longer participate through attendance. Participation in outreach, Christmas hamper example, happens as it is relevant to this audience who long for activity over passivity.
- A conversation with those confirmed last week indicated that the environment was their number one concern, and this does not emerge as a church topic.
- It was offered that the filter of social media begins with the premise that organized religion is not responsive to social needs or purposes. The counter narrative does not happen.
- While Sunday Morning may see stodgy, impersonal, and lacking in personal connection other ministries, like Theology on Tap or Book Clu, beget that connection.
- It was offered that while there are ongoing non Sunday ministries these have little connection with the liturgy and focus of Sunday services. How can be external to the sanctuary ministries become reflected in the Sunday morning experience?
- Those who aren't here are the ones who don't see the relevance of being here. We need to check in with the missing. We need to ask the 30 – 40 year old "kids" what changed in their relationship to us.
- Music is important to the missing generation. We were also a long time in transitions between ministers. We lost people during the process.
- It was offered that we were speaking of two different things. The readings today were about praising God and how to demonstrate our actions and response to the message. Worship is not entertainment. The audience is not the congregation but God.

- It was noted that a person is on a hunger strike outside of Province House in protest against clear-cutting and in support of enduring habitat for moose. This is an issue that could be part of a service. Perhaps the striker could speak at a service.
- A 40 year old who remains connected to the church offered that life is unbelievable busy on weekends. Additionally, we as a society aren't free to talk about spiritual things at workplaces as part of our general being. Conformity is pushing spiritual life into oblivion. It was also offered that it took a long time to be accepted as an adult in the church. And some are still working on this – even into their 5<sup>th</sup> decade this person still feels they are sometimes still seen as the child.
- Churches and ministers tend to make the news for the wrong reasons. If the vibe is always bad there is a profound sense of social pressure not to mention one's connection to church and organized spirituality.

### **Education opportunities at Christ Church**

- To a background chant of “good ministry costs money” (heard at other points as well), it was noted that Christian educators need background, aptitude, and foundation. Guilty or goaded parents are those who should be responsible for Sunday School teachers.
- It was offered that 2 hours in the seats is not a learning method tuned to the Sunday School audience.

### **Do we deal with conflict well?**

- The saga of dealing with a trip hazard power cord was noted as an example of endless permissions and process standing in the way of common sense.
- We ask about the conflicts noted in the survey and in our perceptions of ourselves as a congregation. Yet we hear little. Perhaps in a public forum we are not offering what is seen to be a safe place to have these conversations.
- Perhaps in general we need to provide ways for the congregation to raise concerns privately and yet have some recognition that issues are being raised.
- A minister offered that they are often told things where their immediate response is that this is something to talk to someone else about as it is their thing or responsibility. It was wondered if this is perceived as not listening or responding.
- It was offered that some of the difficult conversations have involved staff and individuals rather than the wider and collective church. While transparency is a general principle there are times when the overriding concern necessitates silence and the sense of non-transparency.
- Making the solar panels a priority was renewed as a concern.

### **Is our leadership representative of us?**

- It was noted that any things we like take energy. We may not have a lot of it to spread around. We don't have the numbers to support a lot of initiatives that we all agree are worthwhile.
- Leadership is difficult. There is an expectation that church leaders and active members must be little saints. It's not necessarily inviting.

**Lisa Vaughn closed us in prayer.**

## White Board Capture: Week 3

### Youth to church

- Children report not being interested in church as the focus seems to be on sin – the church is just not relevant.
- Religion has been deemed not relevant by society – we need to change the filters – maybe focus on fellowship.
- Highlight and incorporate our social programs into the ministry.
- We should do the research we need to do to develop programs that will be attractive and meaningful.
- We should reach out to parishioners who have left who were active and get them to talk to us and maybe come back.
- The service structure doesn't work for kids. Music is important. We need a session talking to kids.
- Can we marry our worship and relevance?
- We should invite relevant social movement people to be in our services – i.e., the hunger striker against car cutting.
- Ask leavers why they leave.
  - Doesn't fit their lifestyle.
  - Kid's activities take up the weekend.
  - Society doesn't allow talking about religion in some jobs.
  - Church as an expression of unity and peace
- The media has influenced the young to see church as bad.
- We need professionals to educate our youth.
- This generation is not passive, need activity.

### Conflict

- Do we handle it well – No
- Is the committee structure an issue?
- Do we create a safe environment –
  - do we feel safe going to someone privately with an issue?
  - Leadership doesn't listen and react.
- Lack of transparency
  - People are holding back.

- People don't want to understand the other side.
- Leadership finds that people bring issue to them and not the people who can make a change –
- We need to act to be relevant – the solar panel issue.
- Proper governance must balance transparency and community.
- People with a long history at Christ Church feel pigeonholed.
- Is our leadership issue of having a non-changing core of leaders just due to our low numbers?