

LADNER CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF TOWN HALL MEETING HELD NOVEMBER 28, 2018

This executive summary highlights the responses received to questions discussed in small groups at the Town Hall meeting, or submitted by individuals. Compiled by Bev Bandstra on January 22, 2019.

Opening Questions

1. When asked when each person felt a deep connection to our church, many people mentioned engaging in worship (especially when we had a baptism, profession of faith or a special Sunday). Others noted a bond to the congregation when they first joined our church, serving as an elder or deacon, or when George Keulen and Mike Koot were pastoring. Several mentioned the support they received during family difficulties or illness was significant to them.

To many respondents, community among our congregation is most tangible when everyone is working together. Being involved made many people feel connected (hospitality, financial giving, volunteering in the kitchen). For others, special occasions such as wedding or funerals were significant. Several people mentioned being engaged with our new immigrants, as well as being involved in Basic Skills Camp, Cross Training, and Friendship Coffeehouse as meaningful. One respondent said they are most excited about our church right now as we look to the future and a new beginning.

2. When asked to name one wish, hope or dream each person has for the future of our church, the overwhelming response was increasing our membership. Many wanted more young families to join us. Several said that we need more young people, and more children. Retaining young families was a concern.

Diversity was mentioned many times: diversity of culture reflecting Ladner's changing demographics and diversity in ages of members. Growth in fellowship was key to many people, especially striving to have closer connections between generations. Remaining faithful and growing spiritually as we grow in numbers was a wish of many. Growth in discipleship, faith and prayer was important. Being of greater benefit to our broader community was significant to many respondents.

3. Answers to our deepest concerns for our church at this time focussed on viability or sustainability: declining membership and an aging church population were mentioned. Concerns included not knowing where we will be in ten years, and a lack of enthusiasm and commitment from a segment of our members. Also, will we be able to sustain financial commitments? Some expressed concern with costly housing pushing young people away, our youth drifting away to other churches, and that we offer very little for youth and young adults in programs.

There was concern about a lack of leaders, the possibility of burnout for our Associate Pastor as well as the core group of people who are involved in many of the ministries of our

church, and a sense of an increasing lack of volunteers. Cutting out redundant ministries concerned some. Others were concerned that we remain unified while we have no lead pastor, and that we do not forfeit values to attain growth.

Other concerns listed were the need to focus on healthy spiritual growth, that we remain Reformed. Also, that we do not become stuck in tradition. Bridge building with other churches such as joint programs and joint worship was mentioned.

Church Ministries

1. What does our church do best? Answers included Bible-based sermons, our worship services (especially the music), and that we are friendly and welcoming. Care and prayer for each other was noted, as was fulfilling financial obligations. A significant number of respondents cited our New Immigrants Support, as well as other ministries such as Single Parents, Basic Skills Camp, Cadets, GEMS, and Friendship Coffeehouse. Rising up to new challenges and faithful volunteers were mentioned.

2. Where could we most improve? The importance of family visits by elders, with follow-up when people are missing church was noted, especially as many small groups are not working. More leaders are needed. We need to be more intentional about building relationships. Intergenerational interaction was mentioned, and more volunteers, especially seniors.

Discipleship was noted: equipping members to live a Christian life-style, embracing change, reinvigorating small groups, building our own spiritual wellness.

Connecting with the surrounding community, being more outward looking, and being more visible is important to many. We should utilize our facility more – for community use and events (Alpha, AA).

Senior Pastor (Lead Pastor)

1. Our expectations for a senior pastor? Respondents listed great sermons / solid preaching as the greatest expectation. Being theologically Reformed and Kingdom oriented were also important. Our next Senior Pastor should be a shepherd to all ages, with the ability to motivate, empower, challenge, equip and lead. A good communicator who is engaging and approachable, with a focus on outreach was noted. A passion for young people and a willingness to guide them was very important. As for attributes: male or female, YOUNG, energetic, personable and perhaps a different ethnicity.

2. What can our next senior pastor expect from us? Our prayerful support was foremost, along with encouragement, cooperation, and openness to new initiatives. Members said they would step up to help, using their gifts to support the pastor. Faithful church attendance, and good support from the Council were also noted.

Worship

1. What is it about the way we worship that is meaningful? Our worship services are appreciated in many ways. Many sensed the communion of the saints during our worship, and noted that our worship services are edifying and God-honouring. Several appreciated the solid preaching, meaningful communal prayer, monthly celebration of the Lord's Supper, and the variety/diversity in our services. Appreciation was also expressed for well-themed services (songs and liturgy supporting the sermon), the planning that is involved, the participation of worship leaders, meaningful liturgy and the order of worship. Our congregation's excellent singing was noted and the music teams are valued.

2. When asked if each person would invite an interested neighbour to a worship service, the majority said yes, some said maybe – depending on the service and/or preacher, and some said no – for a variety of reasons, such as our services may not be appropriate for new believers or young people.

Mission

1. How might God be calling us to participate in His mission – here and more broadly? Several people mentioned an openness to explore new demographics, specifically reaching out to Ladner's growing Asian population. Others said we should open the church for community events, present the Gospel in music at public events such as Ladner Days, and sponsor community events that would appeal to many. We could also reach out by continuing to volunteer at the Food bank, and caring for the lonely and the poor.

Becoming more politically involved as a voice for social justice was noted, as was advocating for the unfairly treated. Suggestion: we could convert some of our church property into affordable housing.

It was suggested we become more prayerful together. We should tell our own stories to our neighbours of how God is working in our lives – we are missionaries every day in our community.

Specifics mentioned were: to continue effective ministries such as New Immigrants Support, Single Parents, Basic Skills Camp, Cadets and GEMS. Also, bring back Port 412, have a daycare/pre-school in our church again, find new ways to serve our community. All in all, be a good neighbour.

Globally, our denomination has many outreach opportunities that we support through special offerings and Denominational Ministry Shares.

2. What is the single biggest challenge/ opportunity to our vitality as a church? Most responded with a concern for an aging population and few children, youth or young families. Reoccurring responses: prayer, listening to God's Word so that we may correctly understand God's will, everyone should make an effort to be welcoming. Several people said we need to pay attention to changing demographics and have community events that appeal to the broader community. Some mentioned specifics such as setting a vision to

focus our work, bringing back Port 412 for young people, and following up after Basic Skills Camp with community children. Others noted a general apathy among all churches in North America, competition with worldly pursuits, and distractions that keep members away.

Spiritual Formation/Fellowship

1. How are you growing spiritually? Many responded that they have a deeper awareness of God, often through prayer. Spiritual growth happens for most through engagement in fellowship and ministries: being involved in church life through ministries, in small groups, worshipping communally, Cross Training, serving as a Council member, etc. Some mentioned growth through intergenerational contact, personal devotions and intentionally reaching out to others. Some said they are stalled or stale in their spiritual life or they do not have friends at LCRC.

2. What could LCRC do to help you grow deeper in your relationship with God? Biblical and challenging sermons, accountability in visits from elders, meaningful small groups and being equipped to serve in specific ways were all mentioned as being very important. Also suggested was focussing on children and youth, having more gatherings, and being further involved in church life.

3. What are some ways you've noticed God working through our fellowship? New members were mentioned the most and these new members and friends of the congregation bring huge blessings. Others said our New Immigrants Support is very positive, as is KidsLIFE, Basic Skills Camp and Single Parents. It was noted that we should feel good about our church. Needed? We have passionate and talented workers but we need more passionate leaders.

Additional Comments

- Visioning: The future of our church is very dependent upon the next Senior Pastor and the course we choose to go in the next two years. Visioning for our congregation (focusing on Sunday School and youth), praying we will find a pastor for the young in our church.
- Need to focus our resources on fewer ministries.
- Examine demographics, do a neighbourhood canvas and find out what church can do for people, establish a mission to Ladner's Asian population
- Mutual care and love enriches life for all.
- We are richly blessed with Ernst and Winnie.
- Encourage! Encourage! Encourage your volunteers in various ministries.