

NFC Next Steps

Recommendation to the Elders

2/29/08

The Next Steps task force has been on an interesting journey together as we have leaned into the process of hearing from the Holy Spirit regarding ways the church might be called to change as it relates to our worship gatherings on Sunday mornings. We have shared our personal stories, longings, and experiences. We have studied the roots found in our heritage and named the core values that shape the spiritual understanding of who we are as God's church.

During this time of discernment we have wrestled with several queries: what does it mean to be a church; what does it mean to be missional—to live out our life in the likeness of Christ; how do we foster community; how do we share in communion with one another in the manner of Friends; how do we reach out to those already connected to NFC and those who are not? These have led us to make recommendations that go a little broader than just our worship gatherings.

The discussions of these themes have not brought conclusive answers, yet they have brought several challenges to our attention. Our church faithfully follows Christ in numerous avenues. As a task force, we feel led to highlight the following potential areas of growth for NFC:

1. More time/flexibility in our Sunday morning schedule
2. Greater opportunities for community and connection
3. Alternative gatherings by which to engage the changing culture
4. Continue to intentionally strive to be a church transformed into the likeness of Christ for the sake of others—one that joins God's vision for our city and world

In sitting with these opportunities for growth, the task force resonated with these specifics:

1. More time/flexibility in our Sunday morning schedule

- *Move from three Sunday morning worship gatherings to two.*

This change would allow extended time for gatherings and create flexibility in the flow of Sunday mornings. It would alleviate the sense of urgency to have services end "on time" and allow folks to exit and enter the sanctuary unhurried. This is not based on a decrease in attendance but rather the need to address scheduling issues. This change could begin this summer and tie in with the offering of an extended time for fellowship.

2. Greater opportunities for community and connection on Sunday mornings

- *Offer a coffee fellowship time on Sunday mornings between gatherings.*

Both the worship discernment team and the Next Steps task force have identified "community" as one of the core values of NFC; our vision is to be "a GROWING community." Several dynamic Sunday school classes already provide authentic community for their attendees. There remains a need to provide an additional venue for folks to connect, fellowship, and commune together. We would like to propose an implementation group that could address the logistics of this need and how it relates to our facility and space usage.

The Next Steps team has spent time brainstorming the logistical challenges and has come up with ideas that could be further explored:

- Should we remodel the library area to accommodate a larger crowd for fellowship?
- Should we begin a capital campaign to raise funds to construct a social hall addition, modifying the proposed plans adopted in 1992?
- Should we remove the pews from the sanctuary and replace them with cushioned stack chairs that could be rearranged between the two services, allowing the sanctuary to be the space where the congregation could gather for conversation and fellowship?

- Should we explore alternative sites as areas for people to gather? (coffee shops, homes, social hall, Friends Center, etc.)
- Should we serve coffee on the front lawn with a banquet tent, providing shelter during the mild climate seasons of spring, summer, and fall? (This option could begin as early as this summer.)

3. Alternative gatherings to facilitate engaging the changing culture

- *Appoint a ministry group to explore new ministry opportunities in the offering of alternative gatherings—one way to fulfill our vision to “LIVE OUT love.”*

This group would work with the elders and pastoral team to follow the Spirit’s leading in crafting a gathering that could include sharing a meal together, meeting on site or at different locations, and exploring how we engage our changing culture.

4. Continue to intentionally strive to be a church transformed into the likeness of Christ for the sake of others—one that joins God’s vision for our city and world

- *This fits our vision to be “CHANGING in the Spirit.” We suggest inviting the congregation to a six-week corporate fast in June and July of this year, to seek God and evaluate the ministries of NFC and how we are living out our vision.*

This fast would include times of actual fasting from food, but also laying aside our regular programming, except for our Sunday morning worship gatherings and nursery, to give concentrated effort to our vision of “LISTENING to Christ.”

Additional recommendations:

5. We ask the elders to review how the recommendations proposed by the worship discernment team in the spring of 2007 have been followed up or acted upon.

6. We also ask the elders to consider the task of the Next Steps group complete, once it has communicated these recommendations to the wider congregation.

- *This communication could take place as an optional Sunday school class or in small groups hosted by members of the Next Steps team.*

In presenting these recommendations, we are well aware that this is not a “quick fix” or an easy “solution.” We are humbly aware that change can be difficult and comes with logistical hurdles. We are hopeful that the congregation would lean into this opportunity as laid out before them through the instruction and leadership from the elders and pastoral team. We know that this is just the beginning. Exciting opportunities would follow in creating teams that would host the fellowship time between gatherings. Creative action planning would be called upon to foster the alternative gatherings. Laying down the tradition of our most recent years would create a void in routine that the Spirit could fill with new movement.