

Amalgamation as an Opportunity for New Life and Vitality Webinar

Sharing the Living Faith story:

- Three-point charge in state of decline located in aging buildings.
Do you see any similarities between the challenges that led to the formation of Living Faith Community Presbyterian Church and the challenges that your congregation is facing today?

Collaborative decision-making:

- Formation of a Growth Committee which met monthly using “12 Keys to an Effective Church” by Kennon Callahan.
Think of your own congregation(s). Identify 5 to 7 people you believe would be creative, positive members of some sort of revisioning team.

Who is God calling you to be?

- Are you able to identify one specific ministry or mission project that your congregation is known for in your community? If not, can you think of an activity that brings your congregation joy that could be expanded upon and strengthened? How could this joy-filled activity inform what your future ministry might look like?

Community-needs evangelism:

- Envision your community and its surrounding neighbourhoods. What is the biggest challenge facing your community? What do you find most joyful about your community? What is the average age? Occupation? Household size? Is the same demographic OUTSIDE your church walls reflected INSIDE the church? If not, why not?

Some important considerations:

- If at all possible, discover a new space in which to worship together
- Create a new name for the amalgamated congregation
- Discover who God is calling you to be and who God is calling you to serve
- Find creative ways to share information with your congregation at every step of the process

- Pray – have fun – and pray some more!

Questions to ask when considering amalgamation:

1. What does your congregation do really well?
2. What is the greatest struggle facing your congregation at this time?
3. Define the major needs of your immediate community.
4. How could your amalgamated congregation use its gifts to meet those needs?
5. If your congregation is not a multi-point charge, is there a neighbourhood congregation with which you could partner in ministry?

Next steps:

Consider a creative and fun way to further explore the possibility of amalgamation. An outline for a “Dessert and Dreaming” event is attached to this handout.

Resources:

1. 12 Keys to an Effective Church by Kennon Callahan
2. 1001 New Worshiping Communities – PCUSA
3. Missional Map-making by Alan J. Roxburgh
4. The Missional Leader by Alan J. Roxburgh & Fred Romanuk

“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland” (Isaiah 43:18-19).

“Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:7-9)

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Group Discernment Activity

Dessert & Dreaming Event

Preparation

Invite members of your congregation(s) to come to a dessert and dreaming event. You could prepare fun invitations that could be mailed or handed out at least two weeks in advance of the event. Encourage children to attend as well as their input can be refreshing and creative. On the night of the event, have a variety of desserts available, along with a bowl full of punch, to create an inviting and engaging environment. Pin a large sheet of butcher paper along one wall. Have markers and various coloured stickers available. Set up several tables with seating for 6 – 8 people at each table. On each center of each table, place a colourful piece of paper listing the following instructions:

- List 5 things that you love about our congregation
- List 5 things that we could be doing better

Gathering

As people arrive, invite them to choose a dessert and settle in at one of the tables. Before enjoying the dessert, pray together:

Gracious God, your love is sweet and brings us joy. Bless this time and show us the new thing you are doing among us. We pray in the name of Jesus, amen.

While enjoying the desserts, read aloud Isaiah 43:18-19. One leader will read from the NIV, another reader will then read from the NLT, and a third reader will read from The Message. Encourage each table to discuss what this passage means to them, then take turns sharing the responses.

Introduce the instruction sheets located on each table. Invite participants to take at least 15 minutes discussing their responses and ask one person to record five things they love about the congregation and five things they feel they could be doing better. After the table discussions conclude, invite a member from each table to share their responses with the entire group. During this time of sharing, one of the leaders will write down all of the responses on the butcher paper with marker. The butcher paper is to be divided into three columns; the first column titled “what we love,” the second column titled “what we could do better,” and a third column titled “dreams.” Columns 1 and 2 will be filled with the responses from each table. After each table has shared and the responses have been recorded on the butcher paper, introduce column 3 by saying that God is doing a new thing, as told to us through the prophet Isaiah. Invite the group to dream about ways in which they could address the responses from column 2 in new and unique

ways. No idea is off limits and every comment is to be written down on the butcher paper in column 3.

After all the ideas/dreams for column 3 have been recorded, encourage every participant to quietly read all of the responses and spend some time in quiet prayer and reflection. After a few moments, invite every participant to take three coloured stickers, come up to the butcher paper, and place a sticker beside their favourite three responses/dreams from column 3.

As a group, examine the results, taking note of which responses received the most stickers. Discuss how these responses could feasibly be addressed by the congregation alone, or if it would make more sense to engage in a partnership with a neighbouring congregation to be more effective. Ask for responses, questions, and concerns. As a take-home activity, invite participants to pray about possible partnerships, new relationships, and unexpected opportunities that would make it possible to live out the dreams shared in column 3.

Conclusion

Read together Isaiah 43:18-19 in unison, and close with prayer.

Loving and leading God, give us patience to listen to your voice, give us courage to follow your footsteps, give us faith to trust that you are guiding us on a pathway that leads to the new thing you are doing. We pray in the name of Jesus, amen.

Notes

This is the first step in thinking about connecting with a neighbouring congregation in shared ministry. A core group could be chosen from this event's participants who could continue to meet together to explore amalgamation further, using Kennon Callahan's *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church* as a guide.