

2015 REGIONAL GATHERING NOTES

Discipling the Next Generation: Ministry to Children and Youth Notes

1. How are the churches wrestling?

- Re-engagement and outreach
- Momentum – hard to overcome (peaks and valleys)
- Culture – world vs Christ
- Resources (Human – without burn out)
- Commitment
- Leadership – how do we raise up true leaders?
- Have kids but no programs
- Have volunteers but no kids
- Community kids, church kids – how to integrate
- Kids coming to programs but no Sunday school
- Is Sunday school relevant? Do they have friends attending?
- Are there teacher and leaders to connect with?
- How do we draw parents in and equip them?
- How to attract youth
- Getting men involved
- Curriculum
- Lack of leaders
- Losing kids after grade 6
- Special needs
- Technology
- Non parental support – there is no spiritual base
- Transportation
- Age appropriate activities
- Family with young ones – children’s ministry is necessary
- Planning for future needs
- No continuity in attendance. May have 2 or 12 children
- Develop emotional attachment to church – even if their parents don’t come
- No church hopping
- Asking have we engaged? Legacy?
 - Enter another’s context without compromise
 - Intentional friendships
 - Another group – lost interest/disengaged from church (only attending)
 - Finding volunteers
 - Outreach (local)
 - Discipleship (busyness)
 - Christian Education
 - Philosophy
 - Equipping parents
 - Not to lose them
 - Skipping through door with children to Family
 - Move children/youth
- From work day events to Church

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- How to disciple the next generation when we haven't been discipling ourselves
- How to go beyond programs to building relationships with God and others (Mentoring)
- How to "walk" together with Jesus
- Investment into relationships
- How to grow and develop lasting fruit
- Children sent to church but no parents
- Being faithful even when the harvest is not obvious

2. Signs of Challenges in Ministry?

- Building relationships within a short window of time
- Being the voice of truth in the midst of other voices
- Youth not being there (attendance)
- Number of options (open house, parental feedback, social media, surveys)
- Criticism of young people (level of distrust)
- Lots of youth, merging world with a Christ view
- Not seeing results in intentional relationships
- We should celebrate the watering and planting
- Pray/listen/tell our story so that we can celebrate
- Celebrate publically includes the story that hasn't ended in salvation
- The process of loving other is invaluable it helps us 'see' so many more people
- Be intentionally Christ centered is hard when people leave- people are left asking why especially if there is no exit interview
- Have an entrance interview: why are you coming? Right/wrong reason?
- Age gaps
- Lots of people at "events" less people at "church"
- No leadership
- Need to connect the youth
- Get hold of them early
- Competition for their time. Kids are involved in so many other activities, sport... etc.
- Keeping them engaged in the church
- Encourage them to get involved in other church activities
- Give youth more tasks to do in the church
- Help them to work into taking more ownership of things
- Why do we fear?
 - 'presentation' mode creates fear
 - Because what if we don't have all the answers?
 - What if we mess up and don't do it right?
 - What if we can't back it up?
 - STOP - we change and grow too - as believers we have questions too
 - Special needs kids
 - Helpers don't want to miss worship
 - Parent helpers who haven't been disciple
 - Youth leave for contemporary church

3. Early Responses

- Church being an expressive platform
- Engaging in the ways They are interested in

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- Having a prayer partner
- Opportunities to express their gifts
- Enabling kids/youth/young adults to lead
- Having a vision/goal helps to focus the group
- Parental involvement
- VBS – after school
- VBS Spring break
- Mountain Movers
- Mom's Group
- Multi-Language groups
- Community Building
- Empowering kids towards ownership
- Narrow the specificity of how they serve
- Youth alpha
- Talking instead of listening
- Listening to stories of amazing miracles
- Telling our God stories
- Play groups & moms of all ages group
- Music & youth (13-17), connect with other churches
- Relationships first, get to know parents
- Speak their language
- Be the extra adult
- Youth leaders transitioning , youth belong when they lead
- Have people involved with the community youth group
- 4 week block for better connection. Keep rules the same
- Train your leaders
- Get congregation aware of curriculum
- Showing Jesus love by example
- They won't hear the message if they don't experience it
- Be a part of their lives outside of church
- Rotating teachers
- Get better material
- Video clips, PowerPoint, Facebook
- Offering rides to pick up and drop off kids
- Church going with what they have at the moment until they get more willing volunteers

4. How to Build on Early Success?

- Don't stop trying
- Input from youth for youth
- Consistency between phases of change – having a solid leadership team
- Multi-generational
- Offering youth options including retreats
- Exploring congregational skill set
- Going beyond just Sunday morning
- Intentional vocation
 - To anoint people in their vocation and send them into the world i.e. hairdresser, mechanic...
- BBQ for your neighbor
 - Encourage hospitality

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- Parental involvement
- Trying to connect age groups to build relationship
- Let go of “but...”
- Team building. Share your vision with the church
- Evolve in the use of technology
- Prayer
- Colouring in the back for children
- Realizing problems/needs and addressing them via fact collecting/surveying people in church and leadership
- Have a desire to not only educate youth but get them involved.
- Started a young mom’s group (Began with older women to start – Titus principle) Walking together
- Praying for people to be willing to lead or host (sharing the load) to come out
- Going back to the basics of Acts 4:42-47
- 5 leaders (men) over the boys group – take responsibility (sharing the load)
 - Program and reaching into homes/ connect to parents
- Pastor – (Mentoring the men) Empower to share – Truth/Experience
- Bathing EVERYTHING in prayer
- Responsibilities change over time

5. What are you dreaming about?

- Toastmasters
- A prayer pyramid in church
- Youth service
- Youth discover and experience Christ
- Christian fellowship in local area
- Helping young people see their dreams (God given) i.e. mentoring/coaching/leading
- People inviting other people
- Teach practical “life skills”
- Connect to community
- Family ministry – every young person connected in with a young person of faith
- Purpose driven sports for kids
- Get more kids committed to coming
- Influencing parents
- VBS Saturday & Sunday
- Parents come to watch kids in service
- Large enough congregations where these ministries are flourishing
- Bridging the gap between older and younger attendees
- Starting something new, more powerful
- Healthy ministries during the week
- Help them have a missional view, not just what’s in it for me
- Wanting to build youth ministry, starting with a coffee shop to attract youth
- Want to develop more activities for children and somehow offer something to attract youth.
- Encourage family to talk a lot
- Build on what we are starting
- Kids given an opportunity to have a firm foundation
- The youth freedom within the church

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- Ability to act on behalf of youth
 - To give a voice to the needs of the youth – identity and technology
- Divide the youth into groups based on their needs and passions
- Make the youth into future disciples - Leadership
- Overlap of leaders to make youth group transitions smoother
- Providing opportunities for teens to get community hours
- Find out what matters to kids and what matters to parents

6. In retrospect, what would you change?

- Focusing on discipleship (bigger is not always better)
- Don't be discouraged
- Be more intentional in every way
- Communicate that you care!!!
- Start sooner?
- Spend more time developing relationships with parents & others in the church
- Listening
- Keep records (track attendance, minutes of decisions)
- Don't listen to negative voices
- Pray more
- More honest in talking with people about problems
- Keep it simple
- Bigger teaching blocks
- Young people not ready to help
- Forced mentoring relationships
- Community kids not coming
- Be more aware of cultural & technological changes
- Be more aware of changes in interests of kids
- Reach them earlier – recruit more leaders
- Allow children to be children – help them with proper respect and responses
- Be mindful that structural changes need to be negotiated carefully

7. Advice

- Our churches are not restaurants but family tables
 - Look, ask questions , engage
 - Quit living in 'presentation' mode, talk about Jesus and faith naturally
 - Stop waiting for the door to open
 - Consider context
 - Listen
 - Ask good questions
 - Do not be discouraged
 - "Bigger picture" – takes a process of years
 - There is no right model
 - 10 to 15 years, not 2 to 3 years
 - Build on your strengths
 - Our passions drive out ministry - don't do things because you feel guilty
 - Getting to know parents
 - Lead pastor talking to families

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- 40 hours a year (family has 3000 hrs) – train parents
- Relationships are important
- Communicate that children are welcome at Sunday School and also in the service
- Have quiet activity alternatives for kids
- Prayer, prayer, prayer
- Communicate the progress.
- All the churches to have regional gathering that include youth
- Have someone in the church focus on the topic
- Promote/use the talent of the youth to include them more in national meetings and discussions – youth representation at the national level
- have more youth conference
- more youth engagement
- partnership with youth oriented , para church organization

Expect “failure” – use them as learning experiences [Plan for future – long term]

- Keep on trying no matter what the numbers are
- Continue to reach out, keep contacts open (relationship over programs)
- **Internet** – email, Facebook, texting
- Cards & Letters – Grandparenting (prayer cards)
- Coffee, lunch
- Men to connect to the boys that don’t have a dad at home (or a Christian dad)
- Plan family events and connect with other people in the church (Mingle)
- Prayerfully take risks

Extras/Resources

- You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church...and Rethinking Faith by David Kinnaman
- Today’s Teen Conference (Youth Unlimited)

Ministry among Members of the LGBTQ Community Notes

- Is our gathering place “safe”?
 - Need for a wide discussion recognizing complexity
- Questions:
 - Why isn’t the church able to help?
 - Who is in leadership and why? People with experience with LGBTQ issues?
- Hearing from people...
 - Accountability/mutual support
 - Do we treat homosexual vs. heterosexual sin differently?
 - A “hierarchy” of sexual sin
 - Do we have a full understanding of the Gospel... grace vs morality
 - Embrace/affirm singleness
- The Church should think about it in similar ways as parents with their children...
- Trying to be more engaged with the transgender community
 - Churches have attendees who are transgendered

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- Early death (suicide)
- What we see “outside” of the church is as important and one the places we can look is in our schools
- Engaging (invited to engage) with gay pride in work places etc (how do we respond?)
- Let’s not imagine that this is not in our churches regardless of if it is “open”
- Early individuals who “came out” were not given the opportunity to stay and attend
- Little attempt made to embrace and pursue
- How Jewish must gentiles be?
 - Married a gay couple attending a church
 - Plant and they want to know who Jesus is...
 - What if the people already know Jesus – How do we respond?
 - Do we alienate those who are “gay & lesbian”
- We have to love them, but...
- This would hold people in a strange tension of figuring out how to respond, walk away or other...
- Challenge:
 - Christian resources & church speak to “wrong” and nothing else
 - Of we promote celibacy, what does this mean? (end of life, companionship, kids...?)
 - The church has to provide the intimacy that we are asking them to forgo (the role of community)
 - Can we offer freedom for people to be and remain a gentile (this can be substituted in other context)
 - Begin with space & room at the table for individuals to connect
 - To start with inclusivity & then allow them to “work” out their own salvation
 - They are real people with needs, hopes and feelings
 - Act in love, genuine love
 - Being aware of our own thoughts, biases, etc (self honesty)
 - Inclination to treat them differently than anyone else
 - If God directs them to us we need to respond
 - Being practical
 - Interact and introduce yourself
 - Check our attitudes and what we say
 - Learning that language matters (words, body, tone) i.e. could say “disgust”
 - Being prepared to have an open and heated discussion?
 - There is no hierarchy of sin but we don’t identify i.e. “all the gossips sit over here”
 - Knowing how to speak the truth in love
 - Being a safe space for ANYONE
 -
- Are we still struggling with the “Love God” “Love our Neighbour” as a starting point?
- Condoning & friendship are separate issues... rather a sacrificial unconditional love starting point with our churches
- Discipleship should be a natural outflow of solid “love centered” relationships
- Challenging questions around the church is position in families, marriages... etc
- Looking within the doctrinal statements there are variations of understanding and implementation
- What is the right way to minister?
 - Looking at the heart before behavior
 - Pointing people to a life submitted to Christ

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- Do we give God time work in people?
- Move from requirements for entrance to the invitation to come and join the pilgrimage

- **Prepared**

- If not, are we willing and able to become safe
- Are we prepared for heated discussions?
- What prejudices/attitudes do we have and what prejudices/attitudes do the LGBTQ have?
- Are we prepared to voice & own those attitudes/prejudices
- Language and communication is important
- Can we truly love the person and not see the label 'gay'? Are we willing to do that?
- Do we truly believe that ***our sin does not equal our identity***, and if so, why can't we act like? i.e. our sexuality does not equal out identity
- How do we love them and love them well with patience because this is God's work
- Are we prepared to listen? And let God speak (not necessarily through us)
- How do we love and support and not convey it's all fine
- People who God loves as much as he loves us; not projects
- Do we over think and project onto people and do we have unrealistic expectations
- We should show grace

- Admit ignorance
- Become informed
- Listen – A) person's story
B) Holy Spirit
- People vs Project
- Journey toward Wholeness in Christ for all (1-4)
 - Messy "progress" with God – together
- Discipleship
 - Holy Spirit – let Him do His job
- Perception
- Church – historically done a disservice in terms of acceptance
- Expectation from attendees – shunning?
- Relational Importance (invited and loved)
- One church stated that they stayed away from polarizing conversations that would cause division
- Allow the Holy Spirit to convict and move in the hearts of the people
- What is going on – observation from both sides (inside the church and outside)
- One church stated that they invited a woman from a same sex relationship read scripture and witnessed her being moved at being included
- It is not just about renouncing homosexuality and affirming heterosexuality, but recognizing that there is brokenness within heterosexuality as well that need to be renounced (broken areas)
- Get over the "Us" vs "Them" mentality - there is just us

What does love look like? What is the meaning of love? Can you love while still saying "no" or disagreeing? What does that kind of love like?

- Dreams/Advice
 - Leaders and pastors can create a culture of openness and transparency on authentic struggles
 - Demonstrate that we can be trusted with people's personal information
 - Walk in humility

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- Create a forum for education and dialogue
- Tap into resources (community, books, people)
- LG have something to offer spiritually
- How to reach the LGBTQ community around us
- Reactions of the LGBTQ community to our actions
 - Love the person hate the sin?
- The Law
 - What EXACTLY does scripture say?
 - How to establish boundaries
- Staying connected although issues exist
- Changes
 - Now more accepting BUT shoved on us by society
 - Would want the church to change
 - Some individuals within the LGBTQ community feel that we are wrong in our Biblical interpretation
 - Changed the way we viewed the person
 - How are we to live “apart”
- It is a volatile issue
 - Polar opposite approaches to the issue
 - “They” need to see Christ in us first
 - I can do nothing but through Christ
 - Choice vs Being
 - Society creates gender roles – Bible specified genders – categorized
 - Up close and personal relationships create clearer opportunities and thinking
 - Beware of “not knowing” and speaking, prescribed
 - It is dangerous to identify someone with one quality
 - We don’t need to abandon them, but they are easy to love when viewed as people – not as a sexual orientation or other characteristics
 - Not a church wide conversation for all churches
 - Generation perspectives (within church & society) vary greatly
 - So: we need to be prepared as churches: how do we do that?
- Listen more/Talk less/Stop Judgement
- God can change hearts
- Grace and truth
- Have to tools to understand and better discern (lessons, preaching etc...)
- Need of prayer and the Holy Spirit
- Live grace
- Prejudices won’t go away until we invite them in
- See the whole person (not just their sexual orientation)
- Grace to have an open discussion
- Using words like “those/these” people isn’t constructive
- It is negative because “those/these” people are friends, neighbours, colleagues and family members

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Missional Engagement with Our Neighborhoods Notes

1. How are the churches wrestling?

- Resistance to new ideas starting to change
- Getting 'buy-in'
- Blend of invitation & challenge
- Traditionalists – direction/re-direction
- Identify your surroundings
- Your territory/needs
- Strengths
- Are we culturally relevant?
 - Church doesn't have to look like Sunday Morning
 -

2. Signs of Challenges in Ministry?

- Bridging local & global missions
- Courage to follow through
- Getting people to look out the window
- People set in their traditional ways
- Leaders
- What to represent
- How to measure success
 - Sunday morning attendance?
 - Leading people to Christ (Kingdom Building)
 - Don't measure non-attendance as failure
 - Do we see positives in the lost
 - Do we practice humility the way Jesus does?
- Ready to listen
 - Cultural, Language, Age and our own congregation
 - Not being allowed (to do all the is necessary to make the programs work)
 - Being afraid to open "doors" (communication) – someone else's job not mine
 - Having a loving and open relationship
 - Not being 'preachy'
 -

Solution:

- Reaching out to:
 - Single moms, homeless individuals, children at summer camp

Challenge

- Addressing self-sufficient people

Solution

- Offering programs that appeal to the community
- Partnering with other organizations – take help
- Be a good listener
- Serve

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3. What Works?

- Meet the needs of the people – partnership
- Supporting daily needs i.e. help with homework or offering your space for events
- Facility community use with new church
- Involve other Christian churches to partner together
- Acts 1:9
- The world is my Parish ~ John Wesley (UFMC Elevate) (SSM FMC May 31)
- The body of Christ at large : **L**(love) **A**(action) **W**(words) of Christ
- Alpha program taken to the people
- Possible church plants (local/beyond)
- Thinking outside the box
- Early responses:
 - Passionate people
 - Excitement
- Responses changed over time:
 - Sustainable or not
 - Evaluate
 - Pulling plug can be hard

What We Can Do

- Partnering with the community
- Promotional events
- Engage the youth
- Reach across the lines – working together
- Think/Stepping outside the box – what we do and how we think Church should look like
- Get past tradition
- Plant seeds and nurture them
- Be passionate ministers
- Be open to changes
- Lose the fear by confronting it
- Willingness to embrace change
- Be mindful of your weakest links
- Leadership has to be outreach minded
- Define neighbor together
- Actively engage...doing our thing
- Bring light and love and purpose to “all people”
- Address disunity/fears/cliques
- Intentional ministry discussions
- Conversation with other church leaders in community – unite
- Work towards the dropping of sad stereotypes
- Meeting them where they are – not expecting them to meet you where you are (work, play, serve, study)
- Addressing the questions people are carrying without breaking the people carrying them
- “relationship are important”
- Prayer process of permission
- Openness to opportunities to be used in the community (be involved)

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- We don't have tent meeting anymore – we bring Jesus light into context to engage people in risky way

4. What are you dreaming about?

- People would become Christ followers, not simply “increasing in their spirituality”
- “not good advice – good news” (NT. Wright)
- disasters are part of being real – not sure I'd change a thing other than to make sure we're known for what we do and how we love, not for what we don't do because we are above...
- Build relationships – eat at their table.
- Board retreats focused on dreaming
- We are kingdom agents – we have a job to do
- Release leaders into the community
- Small groups doing missional projects (local/beyond)
- Seek, pray, listen to what the Lord would have us do
- Find out the community need : i.e. grief support group (St. Joe FMC)
- Expand current outreaches – city wide/islandwide projects
- More involvement in Pregnancy centre, Teen Challenge, Food Banks, Soup Kitchen
- Become socially aware of what's happening in society
- Programs/Ministry Opportunity
 - MOPS – Mothers Of Preschoolers
 - Coats and ready Buddy program in local Pre-school
 - Food Locker – students at Georgian College in need
 - One on One with women in group Homes
 - Community BBQ's – meeting the needs of those in isolation?
 - 'Soup Café' – engaging the elderly – building relationships
 - Phone ministry – to isolated/elderly
 - “Chatters” reaching out the elderly (old to old)
 - Door to door cookie handouts
 - Connection via simple one on one things – snow shoveling
 - Challenge is how to put this type of outreach/connection into practice
 - Do you understand the DNA of your church?
 - i.e. St. Patrick's Day event
- Developing authentic relationships – over dinner.
 - Addressing issues over conversation and food
 - Couples meeting in couples homes – not a “church” event
 - Over common interests
- Join/Partner with other organizations in your community – not necessarily Christians organizations
- Goals- to represent Christ! Don't 're-invent the wheel'
- “set Free Durham”- 15 churches/cross denominational event
- Church wide “buy in” to community mission

5. In retrospect, what would you change?

- Bathe ideas in prayer
- Communicate

6. Next Steps

- Evaluate our resources – where are we spending our money?

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- Does our budget reflect our vision?
- Are we balancing 'local' missions with 'overseas' missions? There are local needs at the church to church level
- **Maintain Current Involvement**
- Debt centres
- Coffee drop in
- Food Banks, Community gardens, thirst store/clothing exchange
- Partnerships churches & community organizations and schools,
- Neighbourhood engagement, events, visits, etc...
- Community programming – family, youth,
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- Are our pastors out in the community?
 - a) they need to be supported by the church
 - b) needs to schedule this 'out of office' time to be in the community! Set the example!
- Place more emphasis on sharing what God is doing in our community through our ministries
- Evidence of God's goodness - at offering time
- Take personal responsibility to serve my community
- Find out what resources are available that can also help up – partnering
- When connecting with other churches and providing promotional things also make a personal connection with their leaders

7. Advice

- Pray
- Seek the Lord's will
- Bible focus
- More than just programs
- Ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:16-21)
- Do it together in harmony (be on the same page)
- Spend a lot of time listening (listen to God, listen to community)
- 1 John 3:16
- Find the challenges facing your church
- Know your community
- Talk to people in your community and build relationships

How does one go about getting their foot in the proverbial "community door"?

- Talk to people in the know
- Recognize that you can't be all things to all people
- Find your niche
- Trust what God is doing elsewhere
- If you don't have any significant relationships that aren't Christian – reach out
- If you don't have any Christian friends – get plugged in
- Be available
- Don't run a program – invest
- Be involved in the community and listen for needs
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- Pray – listen – act – evaluate

- When the Dream is big enough facts don't count

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- How to connect with neighbours
 - Relationship building
- God's plan doesn't always make sense
 - It's not always a rosey picture but God takes care of all
- Without God it all goes down hill
- Consistent perseverance to reach out to our neighbours
- Dealing with Dream Killers
- Courage to share Jesus
- Our agenda isn't more important than their needs
 - Are we engaging our community of staying within our walls
- Does our witness model "HOME"
 - Do our ministries strengthen or weaken families
 - Time and credibility
- What we're trying
 - Meet community in backyards, Garage sales, Corn roast/Family Day, Movies/popcorn, Carol singing, Knock on doors with info (for programs), Open House with food, Funerals, coffee night, walk your dog, visit the sick, BBQ for your neighbor, Worship in the Park (not allowed), nursing home, block party, kids club
 - Other things: interview RCMP, Black Board that reads "How Can We Help You?", questionnaire, Marry the Mayor
 - Partnerships: senior facility, birthday parties for seniors, volunteering, feed high school breakfast
 - Teacher appreciation banquet, volunteer at school

Reviving Passionate Christian Maturity Among us – Faithful in Prayer and Action

1. How are the churches wrestling?

- Building relationships
- Time set aside for prayer without an agenda – growing
- Space for new believers

Resource: 3DM by Mike Breen

- "IN-UP-OUT" – Balance
- Know our identity as FMCIC
 - Social church attendance vs deep discipleship
- What are we missing by not praying and hearing from God?
- We can pray for maturity in the church
- The question- do we know what it looks like of we see it and experiences it? Can we catch? We here must start it
- Reigniting an older congregation to engage with the community
- Young church that are not interested in growing as disciples
- Older congregation think they have served their time
- Seek to be a spirit filled church – prayer leading to action
- Where are we as individuals in our spiritual passion – are we growing?
- My passion for the church plant is translating into a deeper passion for G

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2. How did you know there was a Challenge?

- Youth attending was not a priority
- Lack of love and compassion
- People coming and going
- Scriptures: How many things did Jesus do in the synagogues? What did he do the rest of the week?
- Dedicate the ministry to the Lord the rest of the week - we are leading a reverse model to the New Testament
- Baptized but not staying
- Define what Christian maturity looks like
- Attention to inwardness and self – lack of maturity (milestone 1 & 2)
- Encouraging people to grow – things shift as conversations happen
- Trying to help people identify which milestone they are at
- Church's concerns more about the church than the community
- Milestones is not a race or a competition
- More congregations are very diverse
- High number of attendees but low in commitment to church
- No offerings to help others grow – different for new people to take part
- Feeling versus knowledge of the truth
- Scripture out of context, i.e. interpreting
- Small group attendance – effectiveness in discipling
- Inter-generational
- Are we actually getting together to pray? (what are the numbers?)
- Method required in terms of coming into His presence
- Discipleship is partnership (by twos – Luke 9 & 10)
- Mutual accountability
- "if you build the church you might get disciples, if you make disciples you will always get the church"
- Does Discipleship Really Involve Going Out?
 - It challenges our comfort
 - Engaging people in everyday life
 - Patience with new believers
 - Do we really want to grow deeper?
 - Challenges our busyness
 - What happens between Sundays?
 - Leadership Skills?
 - Use technology well – use to awaken
 - Develop in our families with our kids
- Notice when we have problems
 - It should be an everyday thing
 - We are alright on our own, but function better in community
 - We need to be more intentional
 - Privately we should be able to talk to each other about our faith & life – but it seems that we can't or don't want to
 - Going back to scripture enables us to have the hard conversations
 - Short spurts of spirituality i.e. Egypt & Israel and their response to testing. Miriam's song
 - Evaluate yourself not according to feelings but how to act despite your feelings
 - Question: do you believe that discipling is fundamental? What does that look like?

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- Hard to get people engaged – the pastor is seen as the “one”
- Small group engagement builds maturity but seems to be a core group only - the 80:20 principle
- Blocks to Maturity
 - Criticism/ being judgmental
 - Busyness
 - Distractions
 - Selfish ambition
 - Lack of trust in God, yourself, your abilities, pride
 - Disobedience - not walking the walk
 - Negative relationships
 - Hurt by church/God’s people
 - Misunderstanding
 - Lack of knowledge of scriptures & relevance to today & us
 - False teachers – i.e. internet teaching (both good & bad)
 - Why we need small groups and Sunday morning
 - Hard to get passionate as leadership when you are tired and feel like are pulling rather than people willingly following
 - Do we see passions and maturity as being involved in programs – this could be why we are worn out
- Struggles with keeping seniors involved
- Struggles in rural areas – getting small groups to come together
- Struggle to get people to be participants instead of spectators seeing new life in Christ
- Getting men involved - inviting them to come and learn
- Trying to promote prayer in many different ways
- Struggle to that authentic accountability
- Declining attendance at Bible Study
 - Small groups not expanding
 - Changing to find what works
 - Finding out what your church can do well and focusing on that one direction passionately
 - Talking about the problem but not willing to do much about it – prayer
 - Church looking to the pastor to do everything so I wondered if I should continue
 - Board started to realize a need for them to go deeper
 - Don’t really know each other (sometimes not even their names)
 - Many of our churches are in decline
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3. What did your first early responses look like?

- Small groups
- Prayer vigils
- Unstructured prayer times
- Connecting people with others who are at the same milestone
- Opportunities for outreach to the community
- Discipleship programs – understanding what discipleship is
- Mentoring program – idea is to multiply taking people from milestone 3-4
- Older people mentoring younger
- Rejoice, thanksgiving, prayer, Spirit-led
- Different kinds of prayer meetings

2015 REGIONAL GATHERING NOTES

- Don't make it a scary job
- Relationships, friendship
- How mature, really, are our members?
- How well are we discipling people?
- How does membership affect our maturity?
- Need to be taught how to pray
- Tried
 - 40 Days – unity, exposes people to small group experience with some follow-up
 - Lunch together on Sunday followed by Bible Study
 - Music & worship in community at time of crisis (Malvern)
 - Senior Sundays – include practical skills etc. & food
 - Invite all people into ministry
- Training in Prayer
 - Types of Prayer
 - Practice together ('Acts', etc.)

Resource: The Alpha Prayer Course

- Reminders about balance in prayer
- Journaling – connect with prayer
- Praying in tongues? – normalizing the practice – in Spirit and truth
- Role of Holy Spirit in prayer
- We left it to the pastor
- Tuesday night prayer meeting
- Small groups - but that didn't seem to work in specific geographical locations – themed small groups according to locations
- Need help setting up/starting the group – being part of the church isn't easy- we need to talk more
- Focus on weekly programs
- We started investing in people and saw the fruit of the investment
- We defined what discipling was
- Participate in prayer wherever you are
- Promote prayer
- Disciple, think small (your sphere of influence)
- Discipleship
 - Iron sharpens iron
 - Need to see it modelled properly
 - Need to understand how to speak truth gently
 - Matt 18 – resolving conflict/sin
 - Take someone with you
 - Success on planning
 - Requires prayer
 - Immaturity leads to easy offence
 - Leaders started to pray for a hunger for the lost
 - Leaders lead the way by our actions and not just words
 - Inner healing ministry to enable us to love the way we wanted to
 - Men deepening their relationships with each other so that they are starting work together
 - Survey needs in community and starting to meet them – find someone passionate about the area you want to move in
 - Teaching must go beyond John 3:16 and do the works (Mt 7:21)

2015 REGIONAL GATHERING NOTES

- Tried to do things with each other- organizations and other churches but didn't go so well – started to do things on their own and it was better organized

4. How have your responses changed over time?

- Movement of the Holy Spirit getting stronger?
- Everyone is equal and on common ground – no one on top
- Servanthood and discipleship does not have to wait until you are 35
- Intentionality to get children and youth to understand servanthood and discipleship
- Overtime humility attitude allows for growth
- Creating leaders
- Nurturing received in small groups creates leaders
- Becoming intentional to include everyone in the journey whether they showed up or not – created a 40 day journey to engage and initiate conversation to actually find out where the people are on their journey (assumption is not usually correct)
- Sunday Morning
 - Preaching the Word, relevant life application
 - Connection preaching to small groups, helps commitment & passion
 - Passion for Christ in salvation energizes
 - Worship/through music
 - Word/message
 - Prayer with brothers and sisters
 - Presence of spirit
 - Go to be encouraged and to encourage
 - Communion
 - Involving whole family/kids – worship together. Instill passion in our kids
 - Testimonies and stories
 - Gathering together i.e. Jesus and early church
 - Opportunities for all to participate in the gathering
 - Word from the Lord through scripture & focus on the Lord
 - Way to set aside to-do list and focus on God – time for God.
 - Intentionally submitting to the Lord
 - Sense of belonging
 - Need to hear from the membership as to what God is doing. We need to have eyes opened to see God at work
 - Get back to the basics - the spiritual disciplines : take time and make time to spend with God (silent retreats)
 - Leadership must have themselves prepared first
 - Men in the church take spiritual life “living” seriously. Pray publicly without having to be prompted or prepped.
 - Time for fasting and prayer once a month for the lost and seeing results
 - Board developing a desire to move from a stand-still position
 - Asking God to show mw what it is God wants me to pray for – answers to prayer
 - Do life plan sooner and deeper

2015 REGIONAL GATHERING NOTES

5. What is your church dreaming about in the future?

- Message has become a challenge to the congregation
- Leadership to challenge people to go out
- Responsibility of getting people to go out - leaders/discipleship
- Tracking plan from when people first come to church (i.e. membership, board, leadership)
- Prayer via the phone – conference call (commuter church)
- Mentorship/Coaching – how? – older with younger
- Relational investment
- Everyone needs to be investing in someone
It maybe that we need to be ok in investing smaller
- Prayer meeting – waiting on God, should we add fasting?
- Teachings on Bible, prayer, John Wesley
- What is the Gospel? Do you know how to share the Gospel?
- Heb 10:22 – getting rid of our guilty consciences and be fully aware of the devil's attacks
- Fully support our pastors called by God
Bible tracts- house calls-visitation
- Pray without ceasing – as a natural as breathing
- Developing of maturity – how to get there?
- Small group gatherings key to reviving passion & maturity
- Both mature & non mature participants – trust, sharing – seeking passion
- Types of devotionals move past the milk to the meat – desire and pursuit of Holiness
deepen our prayer life (positive outcome)
- Encouragement from leadership to use your own Bible at meetings. Intentionality and ownership as both make it personal
- Sermon based small groups – interaction with the sermon helps drive it (the message) home.
- Transformation of lives
- Significant number of congregations move into the 4th phase of Christian maturity
- Wisdom how to make discipleship a part of all that we do
- Amalgamate with another group of churches
- Become united (Php 2:2) – love one another
- Plant some churches
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6. What advice do you have?

- Starts with making a change - don't keep doing the same thing
- Check to see if current things are working
- Holy Spirit is prompting us to step outside the boundaries we put on ourselves
- Follow the directions of the Holy Spirit – if that means to change then change
- Take little steps – don't jump into the deep end
- Wait on the Lord's direction – be willing to go
- Relationships- build trust between all people, all age groups
- Unlocking your leaders.
- Contagious passion – relationships deepen
- Get into God's word
- Plan for interruptions in schedule
- Key: God's word – application to life
- Encouraging one another/ loving one another
- Seeking Jesus

2015 REGIONAL GATHERING NOTES

- Mentoring
- Sharing our stories/testimonies
- Trust develops
- Real questions/discussions – helps both mature & seekers
- Authentic/real community
- Life relationships develop
- Becomes more important in maturity than Sunday morning
- Our Walk
 - Obedience to scriptures builds passion & maturity
 - Intentional devotion time in morning
 - Accountability partners help with maturity (mentoring)
 - Fulfilling our purpose stirs passion in us which affects others
- Life Long Commitment
 - No shortcuts to spiritual intimacy
 - Discipline is not necessarily a burden – relationship
 - Fasting in prayer will help us go deeper
 - Developing listening skills in prayer
 - Testimonies of God's work in our growth
- Summary
 - Relationships are important
 - Everyone needs a Paul and Timothy
 - Discipleship begins with love and compassion
 - Discipleship needs to focus on character
 - We need to focus on the marginalized
 - If all the focus goes into Sunday then we won't disciple
 - If we want to reach the kids we have to reach the parents
- What Works?
 - Shared projects/Challenges will push you to deeper prayer
 - Mission – Prayer – Mission
 - Know community needs
 - Small groups
 - Connection to real life
 - Sunday morning to the rest of the week
 - Look for groups who are open
- Getting beyond fear and move forward
- Busyness can stifle passion & maturity
 - Many priorities – work, family church
 - Intentional reorganizing of priorities because of busyness will never go away
 - Recognizing other people's passions & gifts - helping revive them
 - May help us revive our own passions – clear & specific around needs
 - Recognizing seasons of life – commitments
 - Spirit can revive in our commitments
 - Being aware of Lord's calling to ministries/people groups – changes over time
- Acts of Service
 - Serving inside and outside the church
 - Looking for community service opportunities & doing it – encouraging others
 - Individuals, small groups, church body

2015 REGIONAL GATHERING NOTES

- Help others but receive blessing while serving
- As we serve:
 1. Love for God deepens
 2. Reminder of how we are blessed
 3. Lead us to thankfulness
 4. Serving helps us understand our calling/passion
 5. We realize it's in God's power we serve
- By not having "armor" on we can forget we are in a battle
- We need to be engaged with the scriptures
- Be open to change in format – shake people out of their comfort zone
- Be encouraged that God has a plan for His church
- Be faithful to God's call on our lives, be concerned with what God has given us not what He has given others
- Have a safe group- confidential and stable
- Disciple others
- Be committed to Christ
- Have a deeper understanding of the principles of our faith
- Active Christianity

Strategies to ensure prayer happens:

- Teleconference
- Annual prayer and fasting
- Weekly prayer in home groups
- Using the technology to enlist prayer
- Share the answers to prayer
- Incorporate worship into prayers
- Teach on prayer
- See prayer as spiritual warfare
- Keep people in touch with real, specific needs and update them on the results of prayer – the bulletin can be used for this
- Accountability partners in prayer
- Quarterly "day of prayer"
- Include prayer focus in program planning
- What are the signs that passionate Prayer is missing?
 - Monotony in prayer
 - Forgetting to spend time in prayer
 - Giving up when we don't receive an answer
 - Lacking a burden for the church and others
 - Cultivate prayer in the church leadership i.e. the board
- Possible resources:
 - Thestory.com, 1 year sermon, Bible study – children, youth (kit by Max Lucado for \$150)
 - Series 10 lessons on prayer – 10 weeks Ray Stedman