

March 17, 2019

Council Update on Vision Process

Last year our church was wrestling with decisions related to the remodeling of the kitchen, and through those conversations it became apparent that our church would benefit from a time of reflection about who we are as a congregation and how we sense God calling us as a congregation.

The first significant effort to address the need for a clear Church vision took place early December 2018, when a group of leaders met together between Friday evening and Saturday afternoon for a time of reflection. Ben Spalink, a church leader within the regional classis came for the weekend to lead us through a visioning process, and as a first step, Ben challenged us to come up a kingdom concept.

This kingdom concept was defined as “a simple, clear, ‘Big Idea’ that defines how our church will glorify God and make disciples.” Through developing a kingdom concept we have had to reflect on and arrive at a statement about how we are fitting into God's kingdom. As Ben explained, each church, including ours, is unique and the calling of how our church fits into God's kingdom is unique. If we can figure out how we are unique, it can help shape and provide guidance to who we are as a church. Thus, this kingdom concept represents a starting point for our church's vision as we think about our church's future.

When the leaders met with Ben, he helped us begin this process, and we worked through three particular questions: 1) what is our Local Predicament (unique challenges faced by our church as we minister in our local context)? 2) what is our Collective Potential (unique resources and capabilities that God brings together in our particular congregation)? and 3) what is our Apostolic Esprit (area of focus that energizes and animates the congregation)? The idea is that the kingdom concept is to be found at the intersection of these three things, and this is what makes our church unique.

At our meeting last December, our conversation focused on each of these three areas: local predicament, collective potential, and apostolic esprit. At the end of our time, each participant was asked to compose a kingdom concept and these were collected by Council. Since that time, Council has been analyzing what was submitted and assembling a concept that reflected to our best judgment the spirit of those conversations and concepts.

Here is the kingdom concept Council has developed: **“God graciously calls us, in a scattered and isolated age, to be builders of community in which God’s saving word is proclaimed and all are welcomed, fed, and nurtured.”**

Council would like to share a few reflections about each element in this statement so you can see how and why it was composed. First, “God graciously calls us...” God has agency in this statement, in our church, and in our hearts. Any ministry work done through this church we acknowledge is done by God and in response to God's call. We also acknowledge that that calling is itself an act of grace on God's part: we are allowed to participate in God's kingdom work. Praise God.

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Second, "...in a scattered and isolated age..." We discussed at our meeting in December the local predicament of loneliness and isolation which threatens our society. This isolation is the result of brokenness in our relationships with God, with others and with the world he has created.

This brings us to the third aspect of this statement, our response to that predicament: "...to be builders of community..." In our discussions and concepts, we agreed that SSCRC's collective potential and apostolic esprit is to build community. Whether on Sunday morning as we gather here, during Kids Hope mentorships, during Coffee Break fellowship, or during food pantry distribution, we saw that our church is actively responding to this call to mend the brokenness of isolation and strengthen bonds that already exist.

Fourth, "...in which God's saving word is proclaimed..." In all of these communities which our church builds, we recognize the centrality of God's word and God's saving power through that word.

Fifth and lastly, "...and all are welcomed, fed, and nurtured." Along with the proclamation of God's word, our ministries attend to the needs of the whole person: welcoming them into our midst, feeding their bodies and their spirits, and nurturing them forward in faith.

Moving forward with this kingdom concept, Council will be eagerly looking at ways to focus and strengthen our ministries and set goals for the future. We'd like to reiterate the earlier statement that this kingdom concept represents **a starting point** for our church's vision as we think about our church's future. Because it is a starting point you can expect to continue to hear updates as the vision process develops and we covet your prayers for wisdom and discernment.