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November 8, 2017

Dear Friends,

The Crossing Over Visioning Team (COVT) has been meeting since February. Our purpose has been to conduct a thoughtful, in-depth review and analysis of the church's situation, examine our options, and propose a set of actions intended to alter current trends and enable FCCDM to continue in vital mission and ministry on a sustainable basis. Much of the research and discussion has been completed and we now begin the process of sharing our results and recommendations with the greater congregation. A copy of COVT's report and recommendation is included with this mailing.

On Sunday, November 12 following worship, COVT will present its findings in a Congregational Meeting called solely for this purpose. The meeting will provide time for the COVT to discuss highlights of the report and answer questions that you might have. There will be no motions or votes held at this meeting. It is for informational purposes only. There will also be 3 follow-up meetings in which you may learn more and ask questions in a less formal setting.

Many thanks to the COVT for its hard work, and to all of you for your patience and support in this process. We look forward to continuing the conversation.

Blessings,

Bill Evans  
FCC Congregational President

**Crossing Over Visioning Team**  
**Report and Recommendations to the Congregation**  
**Congregational Meeting**  
November 12, 2017

The Crossing Over Visioning Team met faithfully beginning in February 2017 with a broad representation from the congregation. We prayerfully, collectively, and unanimously provide this report and our recommendations. While the congregation has significant financial challenges, we believe our future together holds much hope. It is with this in mind that we offer this report of our work as a team and our recommendations to move our congregation into the future together.

**BACKGROUND**

On Sunday, December 11, 2016, the congregation held its annual congregational meeting. During that meeting, an unbalanced 2017 budget was proposed. For several years, the congregation has not lived within a balanced budget. At the annual meeting, the congregation made the decision for the President of the congregation to appoint a team to explore the financial situation and to make recommendations to the congregation to remedy our ongoing financial condition.

**CROSSING OVER VISIONING TEAM**

The Crossing Over Visioning Team (COVT) consisted of members from the Executive Committee, Elders, Endowment Foundation, and at-large members from the congregation.

Members included: Juanita Scriven, Jazlyn Fitz, Al Edwards, Charlene Butz, Rachel Spiller, Bill Evans, Connie Ryan, Art Jones, and Sally Nadolsky.

Vivian Mogensen served as note taker and participant. Rev. Ryan Arnold served ex-officio. Rev. Sarai Rice provided consultation and guidance.

**REALITIES**

- In recent years, First Christian Church (FCC) has experienced an increasing gap between income and expenditures. The status quo is not sustainable over the long-term.
- The COVT was convened to conduct a thoughtful and in-depth review and analysis of our ministry and financial situation.
- The COVT was convened to examine various options and propose a set of actions to alter our current trend while enabling the church to continue in vital mission and ministry.

## **TEAM GOALS**

The COVT will bring recommendations to the congregation of how to “cross over” to sustainable mission and ministry, including:

- Review our current congregational ministry and identify how we wish to be in ministry with one another in the coming years.
- Review our connections to the larger neighborhood and identify how we desire to be in relationship with the neighborhood.
- Identify options and propose a set of actions that will foster continued development of congregational and neighborhood relationships.
- Review and analyze the full financial and operational scope of congregational commitments.
- Identify options and propose a set of actions to alter our current financial trend.
- Analyze the working relationship between the congregation and the Endowment Foundation. Discuss ways to more effectively partner together to support the ongoing mission and ministry of the church.
- Communicate findings to the congregation in order to foster understanding of our current situation.

## **TEAM PROCESS**

The COVT began meeting on February 16, 2017 and met through November 6, 2017. Rev. Sarai Rice guided the team in discussion throughout the process. Subjects covered in discussions and research during the multi-month process included:

- General church trends and growth
- Building – usage, identity, and external communication
- Neighborhood – Drake Neighborhood, Drake University
- Endowment Foundation
- Finances, including giving and spending trends for past 3 years
- Governance, membership, mission, future dreaming
- Church staffing; Scope of ministry; Weekly calendar
- Congregational culture (mindset, burnout, energy)
- Communication (social media, newsletter, bulletins, building, people)
- Financial stability
- Building assets, challenges, and prospective use. Review and research options to repair, renovate, lease, or sell.
- Staffing - alignment with size of congregation, mission, and needs

## **KEY FINDINGS**

### **Membership & Attendance**

- FCC membership consists of: Silent/Greatest Generation (32%), Baby Boomers (32%), Gen X (8%), Millennials (11%), and Gen Z (17%).
- Our worship attendance has been in a steady downward trend since the 1950's, with attendance currently at fewer than 120 worshippers on an average Sunday.
- Critical mass indicates that a congregation should fill between 40-85% capacity of the worship space. A worship service feels different to

worshippers when there is less than 40% or more than 85% of capacity. We are at approximately 15% of capacity including the balcony and approximately 40% excluding the balcony.

#### Mission and Ministry

- The church gains energy and draws strength in ministries such as LOGOS that provide a sense of community. We are a small congregation with a small volunteer base. We must focus on the ministry that fulfills God's mission, encourages community, and energizes the congregation.
- Conversations by the COVT with Drake University staff indicate a desire by some Drake students to connect with a theologically progressive faith community near the campus. In addition, 70% of Drake students remain in the Des Moines area upon graduation.
- The Drake neighborhood is changing. New housing, a hotel and storefronts will be built to the west of the church. The number of families with school-age children is projected to increase. Ethnic and racial diversity is projected to increase. Median income is projected to increase.
- FCC has hosted DMACC's English as a Second Language (ESL) program for over nine years. FCC has provided childcare for students for most of those years. Although the church has sought and been awarded outside grants on occasion, grants are very limited and have never covered the full cost of childcare for the program. We currently receive no grants. The annual estimated cost for childcare personnel for the ESL program is \$17,445, which is not sustainable.

#### Finances

- The church's expenses regularly exceed our pledges and income. Currently, the budgeted cost of all personnel exceeds total pledges received by \$70,000, which does not include other programming or building expenses.
- The congregation completes a stewardship campaign each fall. A Stewardship Committee usually leads that effort but was dormant for most of this year. The committee was recently re-established but did not function, provide any support, or follow-up most of this year. Additionally, some large pledges have not been fulfilled over the last couple of years.
- The Endowment Foundation is strong with approximately \$3 million in assets, of which \$500,000 is unrestricted funds. The Endowment underwrites the mission of the congregation through general support of the building (e.g. utilities, etc.), covering costs for upkeep and repair of the building (e.g. roof replacement), annual ministry requests (e.g. camp fees), and special requests (e.g. ESL program).
- The church's financial systems are too complicated for the size of the congregation. Oversight of the finance office needs to be improved.

#### Staffing

- Current FCC ministerial/program staff includes the Senior Minister, Minister of Family Life, and Director of Music.

- Based on current trends and standards stated by experts in the field, one fulltime ministerial/program staff is needed per every 80-130 worship attendees.
- Our church currently averages fewer than 120 worship attendees each Sunday.
- We are overstaffed by 1.5 staff positions.

#### Building

- Our building includes 64,000 square feet of useable space. The congregation utilizes approximately 47,000 square feet of that space for programming on a regular basis.
- A comprehensive assessment by the COVT of the education building shows a significant amount of deferred maintenance. Primary concerns include:
  - Painting (Floors 3-5)
  - Carpeting (Floors 3-5)
  - Windows (Floors 3-5)
  - Tuck pointing
  - Bathroom Remodel (Floors 4-5)
  - Air Conditioning replacement (Floors 1-2)
- Additional improvements to the building could be considered in order to allow better use of space for the congregation and to attract potential tenants including:
  - Central Air (Floors 3-5)
  - Sprinkler System (Floors 1-5)
  - New Electrical and Lighting; fire alarms (Floors 3-5)
  - New Acoustical Ceilings (Floors 3-5)
  - Elevators (upgrade security)
- The estimated cost to address the deferred maintenance of the education building is at least \$300,000. The estimated cost of additional improvements to the education building to attract potential tenants is at least \$1.3 million.
- Based on research and conversations by the COVT, there are reasonable prospects to generate revenue for the congregation through leasing of rooms or floors for office space and community activities in portions of the education building. Congregational ministries may have to shift space. The deferred maintenance and at least some of the additional improvements would need to be completed to make spaces and leases attractive to prospective tenants.
- Based on research and conversations by the COVT, there is reasonable interest for sale of the education building to prospective developers, which could include the congregation remaining in the building or the congregation relocating.
- Based on research and conversations by the COVT, there is interest in acquisition of the sanctuary and education buildings by one prospective developer. It would likely mean the congregation would have to relocate. It would be possible for FCC to remain in the Drake neighborhood, if the congregation desires.

## **VISION**

Through God's love and Jesus' teachings, we are called as an intergenerational, thriving, caring, open, and theologically progressive community to seek and build relationships in the Drake Neighborhood, including intentional ministry with Drake students, and lead through creative worship and mission to share God's love in the world.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### Ministry and Mission

- Celebrate the long and faithful history of our congregation in Des Moines and in the Drake neighborhood.
- Acknowledge the shift in size and capacity of the congregation and the need to adjust our ministry to accommodate those changes.
- Confirm our longtime commitment to engaging and prophetic worship, impactful service and mission, and nurturing education that encourages and supports each person's daily faith journey.
- Confirm our longtime commitment to the spiritual growth and sense of community for our children and youth, including the LOGOS ministry.
- Due to the cost, discontinue the childcare provided by the congregation for DMACC's ESL program housed at FCC.
- Over the next two years, the church will determine how we will live out our vision of ministry based on the vision, values and priorities of the congregation. The Executive Committee will establish a Vision Implementation Team to develop the process and lead the congregation through small group conversations and discernment. The process will include examining our relationship to our neighbors, particularly students at Drake University who are searching for a theologically progressive faith community. A Campus Ministry Team will be considered to explore the possibility of a ministry with Drake students.

### Finances

- The Finance Committee created in the summer of 2017 should be maintained on a permanent basis, providing oversight and guidance to the finance office. The Finance Committee reports to the Board.
- Permanently establish a Stewardship Team that works year-round to educate the congregation about Stewardship, organize the annual Stewardship Campaign and solicit pledges, and work to ensure the fulfillment of pledges made to support the mission of the congregation.

### Staffing

- Reduce the ordained ministry staff from two fulltime ministers to one fulltime minister no later than June 30, 2019.
  - The current ministers may remain as fulltime staff through May 31, 2018.
  - A transition time of one fulltime and one halftime minister may be considered from June 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019. Current or

- interim ministerial staff will be considered for each position to meet the needs of the congregation.
- The Personnel Committee and Executive Committee will work together and provide a recommendation to the congregation at the December 10, 2017 annual meeting regarding the retention of the current ministerial staff.
  - The Personnel Committee and Executive Committee will work together and provide a recommendation to the congregation at the December 10, 2017 annual meeting regarding a request for assistance from the Endowment to assist with the transition.
  - The Personnel Committee, in consultation with the Executive Committee, will revise the job description(s) of the ministerial position(s) to meet the needs of the congregation and to assist the congregation in transitioning to a new vision of ministry to be accomplished over the next two years.
  - Reduce the cost of non-ministerial staff by May 31, 2018.
    - Decrease the cost of the position of the Director of Music and reduce the position from halftime to one-quarter time by May 31, 2018.
    - Decrease the cost of the position of the organist in half by May 31, 2018. Staff time will be adjusted accordingly.
    - Eliminate the paid section leader positions in the Chancel Choir by December 31, 2017.
    - Eliminate the paid instrumentalist positions for the Open House Band by December 31, 2017.
    - Eliminate the paid childcare positions for the ESL classes on March 1, 2018 (completion of the spring term).
    - The process to complete all non-ministerial staffing adjustments will be completed by the Personnel Committee in consultation with the Executive Committee.
  - Add a one-quarter time paid staff or contract position of Bookkeeper to provide the professional staff time and oversight of the church's finances.
  - Estimated yearend expense reduction for combined staffing adjustments (ministerial and non-ministerial):
    - 2018 = \$74,635
    - 2019 = \$103,052

#### Building

- The COVT believes the future of the congregation does not include remaining in the building and the congregation should explore leaving within two years.
- The Executive Committee will establish a team of congregational members to serve as the Building Exploration Team to finish the research and discussions of options to repair, renovate, lease, or sell the building.
- Members of the Building Exploration Team will include representation from the COVT, Executive Committee, Elders, Endowment Foundation, and an at-large member from the congregation. The minister will serve ex officio. An attorney specializing in real estate law will be retained to provide expertise and guidance.

- The COVT recommends that the Building Exploration Team pursue options for sale of the building, including an existing option that has been researched and pursued, and purchase another building in the Drake neighborhood to fully and faithfully live out the vision of the congregation.
- The Building Exploration Team will provide a report and recommendations to the congregation for consideration.

Faithfully submitted,  
Bill Evans, Sally Nadolsky, Rachel Spiller, Art Jones, Jazlyn Fitz, Juanita Scriven,  
Charlene Butz, Al Edwards, Vivian Mogensen, Connie Ryan