



## REPORT OF VISIT TO HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH

June 14/15, 2014

At the Visioning for Mission workshop on Saturday, June 14, about 20 members of Hope Church gathered for a meal and conversation on the future. Beginning by singing “Spirit of Gentleness,” we focused on two important concepts: 1) the importance of “holy clarity”; and 2) the value of “holy conversations.”

The clarity discussion referred to the core message of the book Holy Clarity by Sarah Drummond. I stressed the value of clarifying practices in congregational discussions.



Then I referred to the data generated from a recent congregational survey to illustrate the value of evidence and the importance of discussing what the evidence means. I suggested, for example, that the high level of satisfaction reported by respondents to property, communication, and fellowship, suggests that the congregation has higher appreciation of “social” and “physical” components than “spiritual.” Conversation with participants allowed us to place my suggestion in a broader context, i.e., disagreements and conflicts associated with some facets of worship and with the relationship with campus ministry are affecting how people feel about Hope.

Referring to the value of the book Holy Conversations (Alban Institute) for congregations in transition, I identified a list of topics where the congregation needed to focus energy and attention over the next several months:

1. Revenue generation (renting the facility, etc.)
2. Worship planning in the interim
3. Stewardship of time and talent (engaging everyone in discussions)
4. Clarification of the HLC-UM Campus Ministry relationship.

Following conversations on these topics, I invited participants to list the skills/abilities they wanted to see in interim pastor(s). I suggested that the list be combined with the list generated by those attending the session on Sunday morning after worship (see below).

As the session drew to an end, I was asked for a specific recommendation about next steps. In response, I suggested that a Transition Team of five-seven members take responsibility for guiding the congregation through the next six months or so. This team reports to the Church Council but operates independently. Their primary task is to arrange and facilitate the “Holy Conversations” about the list of topics (and other important items). The goal of the Transition Team is to work with the Council, interim pastor(s) and the Synod staff to create a vision for the transition, to implement plans to achieve that vision and, generally, to prepare the congregation for calling its next pastor. Pr. Vigen suggested that the Mutual Ministry Committee become part of the Transition Team, and members of the committee agreed to serve. Four additional members volunteered. I concluded that the consent of the participants was given to this strategy.

Following worship Sunday morning, several of the participations from Saturday night joined other members in a forum to continue the discussion. I gave a summary of the previous session and facilitated a deeper conversation about the issues at hand. My conclusion from the Sunday conversation is that various conflicts over the current and future direction of the congregation are seriously eroding trust and under-cutting decision making. The need for reconciling personal relationships surfaced in Sunday’s discussion.

I asked those in attendance on Sunday who were not present on Saturday to generate their own list of preferred skills and talents needed in interim pastor(s). Then, we compared the results to the list generated on Saturday and identified the highest priorities. The full list is given below:

Highest priorities

Worship presence  
Good listener to facilitate discussions  
Managerial and administrative skills  
Bring out the best in people  
Experience in change management

Valued priorities

High energy  
Creativity and ability to experiment  
Teaching  
Able to forge alliances, partnerships  
Lead conflict resolution/reconciliation

I reported that I would convey this list to Rev. Amy Sevimli in my meeting with her on Monday, June 16, 2014.

Finally, I offer to be present at Hope Church on July 19 or 20 (in the afternoon or evening) to participate in another visioning conversation of their choosing.

I want to express my thanks to Pr. Jim Vigen and the people of Hope Lutheran Church for inviting me into the conversation about their vision for the transition and the longer term future.

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President,