

New Beginnings Follow-Up Report 02/2016

Early in 2015, friends and members of FPCGV were invited to participate in a small group discernment process. These groups studied scripture, prayed and expressed their dreams and convictions for our ministry together. Our elected leaders, pastors and staff accepted as **goals** some of the themes that came forth from multiple groups. But, even ideas that came from just one person were recorded so that ministries and groups could evaluate the passion, purpose, and sustainability for it.

Through our New Beginnings Process we voted to intentionally focus on:

- *Seeking God's mission for our church through prayer together*
- *Spiritual formation of this congregation and building disciples*
- *Training and development of lay leaders*
- *Building connectedness within the congregation*
- *Reviewing all new and existing programs for their sustainability, our passion and energy for them, and alignment with the goals above.*

A year later we want to highlight some of the New Beginnings that are happening in our midst.

#1 MISSION AND OUTREACH

- The Mission Ministry Team has instituted monthly, intergenerational mission activities. The following activities have been organized thus far: Donation Station, yard work at homes of two Meals on Wheels recipients, baking cookies for Feed Our Kids, CONNECT Back to School Fair for GCISD, Habitat for Humanity, the Alternative Gift Fair, and Tarrant County Churches Together for MLK Day of Service. Attendance has ranged from 5-20 on any given day. Volunteers have included children, teens, and adults. The volunteer opportunities have been advertised through the church bulletin, newsletter, website, Facebook, Twitter, email and signup genius.
- In February, 2016, Love in Action, a morning of community and church service on the first Wednesday of every month, kicked off; this includes having lunch together to build new and strengthen existing relationships.
- New Beginnings asked the congregation to think about new ministry initiatives (BIG IDEAS) and encouraged people to organize such proposals around 7 or more people who were willing to give their time, attention and prayers to sustaining the ministry. Neighbors Embracing Woodridge (NEW) is one such proposal that was presented to and adopted by the Mission Ministry Team; this is an ongoing commitment with nearby Woodridge Health and Rehabilitation beginning with improvements to their courtyard, quarterly activities with residents, and specific outreach support of the staff at this facility. This outreach has been joined by the SLAM JAM program who visited, presented a music program, and delivered handmade cards; the Youth who purchased Christmas gifts for a needy resident; and Love in Action who provided a special casserole meal for the staff and in March 2016 will visit one morning to provide manicures for the residents.
- Additionally, members of the congregation who were interested spent a month last summer gathering across the generations to educate ourselves on some of the ministries we help fund and support with our sweat equity.
- The Mission Ministry Team is pleased that our efforts and the budget demonstrate a balance between local and global efforts.

#2 BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

- The Worship and Music Ministry Team brought back the "Passing of the Peace" during some worship services at the discretion of the pastoral team leading a particular worship service. When we do so it will be intended to carry deep liturgical meaning such as that of reconciliation following the "Assurance of Pardon." In effect, "Now that we have been reconciled with God, let us also be reconciled and at peace with one another."
- We learned through New Beginnings that we need to build connectedness within the congregation. Various ministry teams are working on getting people more connected to large and small, short and long-term, serious and less serious small groups—gathering for meals, recreation, mission projects and support groups. Another example of responding to this request was the Christian Education Ministry Team. The Adult Sunday School program was completely revamped and redesigned so that people can come together in small groups who choose their own topics and stay together for the entire school year; also in response to a New Beginnings

recommendation, the weekly topic Adult Sunday Class was revived as This and That. We are having more congregational meals and cookie fellowships through the Fellowship Ministry Team.

- Our Visitor and Evangelism Ministry Team leaders were asked to research ways of welcoming newcomers and have become even more passionate and skilled in knowing how to meet and connect people in meaningful ways upon their first few visits. In 2016 we hope to develop a more formal process.
- Worship and Music was asked to select more familiar hymns. From April to June, 2015, as an sample, we sang hymns in 38 positions in the liturgy (Opening, Communion, Closing Hymns). Of these, 31 were “familiar” hymns (84%). 7 (16%) were new or less familiar (with one song repeated, for a total of six hymns). One question was raised: “More familiar to whom?” This will always be, to some degree a matter of opinion and personal experience.
- In 2015 we began our first support group for Young Onset Parkinson Disease; in Feb. 2016 we will offer a 12 week Family-to-Family class through the National Alliance on Mental Illness for families who struggle with mental health difficulties. And in March 2016 the first Tarrant County “Coffee Days”, an arm of the Grant Halliburton Foundation which supports research and raising awareness of mental health issues among teens and young adults will begin meeting at FPCGV; this is a monthly support group for the parents to find connections and resources in this difficult journey. These three programs were vetted and supported by the Congregational Care Ministry Team; space was approved by the Property Ministry Team.
- The Communications Ministry Team has posted names of Elders and Deacons and Ministry Teams on the church website, established monthly email for community service opportunities, and has facilitated increased on-line sign-up for various church activities and service such as ushers, greeters, Perking Lot, etc.

#3 GROWING AS DISCIPLES

- Through the New Beginnings process we also discerned together that we are called more to make disciples than to simply sign-up new members. We believe that an outgrowth of deeper relationships will be a greater ability for community participants to mutually encourage one another in our ministries. This remains one of our growing edges and an emphasis in all our ministries. Discipleship is beginning 2016 with a major focus toward instituting a Discipleship educational program for the congregation.
- Knowing that growing as disciples depends in part on leaders who are well trained, the Administration and Personnel Ministry Team stepped up the training by bringing in a Spiritual Director in the fall of 2015 to lead a spiritual formation event for new and on-going officers. In the spring of 2015 we are undergoing a series of training components before our regular meetings.
- We hope and believe that the revamped Adult Christian Education program will help us even more in our spiritual formation.

#4 KEEP FINANCES AND MORTGAGE VISIBLE

- The Finance Ministry Team has ensured that we are now more transparent than ever with monthly financial thumbnails in the church bulletin and detailed information posted monthly on the church website. Go to <http://www.fpcgv.org/finance-ministry> to get the same information provided to our leaders.
- The Discipleship and Finance Ministry Teams worked together to launch the Debt Free by 2020 program in May 2015 as a way to keep us informed and to challenge us to pay down our debt so that we can fund even more mission and ministry in the future. Over \$200,000 in extra principle payments on the mortgage have been funded as of January 2016.

#5 KNOW THE NEIGHBORHOOD/ BE KNOWN IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

- Whether it be through the National Night Out hosted for many years on our property, visiting at Woodridge Health and Rehabilitation, the Annual FPCGV Animal Blessing, Trunk or Treat (which hit an all-time attendance high in 2015), mentoring at Cannon Elementary and Grapevine Middle School, offering Self-Defense classes (the enrollment for this keeps increasing), New Onset Parkinson’s support group, Family to Family program, or Coffee Days, we are seeking opportunities to get to know the neighborhood and let the neighborhood know us.
- To help people in the neighborhood know who we are, we now have a supply of fair-trade FPCGV t-shirts to be worn while we are serving in the community. Hopefully, when people make this connection they will feel an invitation to whatever level of conversation and community they might want to have with us. You may purchase

your shirt in the Perking Lot on Sunday mornings or in the church office during the week. Children's sizes are \$10, Adults are \$13.

#6 BE GOOD STEWARDS OF OUR PROPERTY

- Through New Beginnings we became aware that our property is well kept and yet underutilized; we have accepted the challenge to open our spaces to community groups who blend with our mission and vision. With the help of good legal counsel, the Property Ministry Team has approved two new groups using our space on a sliding scale rental basis: 1) CAMP Soar which offers year-round opportunities for children and youth with special needs <http://noackconsulting.com/camp-soar/> and 2) Music Together which provides music and movement classes for young children together with adults <http://musictogethermidcities.com/>
- In addition, we have joined with the police department to host regular self-defense classes; with National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) to host a 12 week class to resource families; one of our members is helping us to host Young Onset Parkinson's Support Group <http://www.dfwyopd.org/calendar.html>; and another member is spearheading Coffee Days.

SOME THINGS WE HAVE DECIDED NOT TO DO

- We have decided not to combine our worship into one Sunday service year-round. Initial thoughts were that this might be a great way to "feel like a single congregation." Further discussion raised concerns regarding limiting potential church growth, perception of crowding by visitors, and scheduling issues and conflict with Sunday School. Significant logistical problems created by a single Sunday Worship Service outweigh potential for feeling more unified and so we hope to build connectedness in other ways.

SOME THINGS WE HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN BUT WHICH WARRANT RECONSIDERATION TO DETERMINE:

1) IF THEY ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT'S CALL TO FPCGV AT THIS TIME, AND

2) IF THERE ARE THE PEOPLE WITH TIME AND ENERGY TO SUSTAIN THESE EFFORTS.

If you feel called to champion and act on one of following, please contact the appropriate Ministry Team or member of the church staff.

- Creation of member sources of information for professional advice, careers, services, etc.
- Consider consolidation from Session & Deacon boards to unicameral and possibly shorten the terms and the number of officers per ministry team
- Offering additional support groups for singles and empty nesters
- Opportunities for prayer groups in addition to the Thursday night prayer group
- Formation of shepherd groups or covenant households
- Reaching out to folks who move into the neighborhood
- Revisit/rewrite the mission statement in a concise form and display it throughout the church
- Hosting holiday lunch or dinner for community kids and families
- Dinner groups or monthly suppers
- Creation of a cooking class
- Set up a tutoring program at our church or at a local elementary school one day per week
- Parents Night out for single moms near church and Big Hope Parents
- Mentoring for residents of Grace Transitional Housing
- Enlarge our presence in Big Hope (e.g more support of families involved, support of school activities)
- Increase awareness of the homeless at Lake Grapevine and define how we can help
- Open the playground for neighborhood use
- Make the church more visible to the neighborhood with outdoor activities, signs, banners; e.g. an outdoor spring worship service and invite the community

REMEMBER, IF YOU HAVE A BIG IDEA

- A **Big Idea** is an initiation brought forth by 7 or more people willing to serve and support the new program. Big Ideas create self-sustaining programming. Present your Big Ideas to the appropriate Ministry Team and the officers will give them top priority on their agendas and in their prayers. This is the fastest way to get something new started.