July 15, 2019

FPC:E Covenant Partners and Active Non-Members,

Thank you for your participation in the Church Transformation Cohort (CTC) consultation weekend, the follow-up congregational conversations, and the opinion poll, as well as your patience while we prayerfully considered next steps for FPC:E. We are writing this letter so that everyone receives the same information about the Session’s decisions and next steps.

As of Sunday, July 7, we had received 119 signed and marked responses to the congregational opinion poll. The Session reviewed all the responses and the comments that were added. Seventy-six percent of respondents support moving forward with the initiatives in the CTC Report. There were 91 valid responses in support and 28 valid responses that were not.

We met as the Session on Wednesday, July 10. After more prayer and discussion, it was the decision of the Session to accept the CTC prescriptions, continue in the process, and lead this congregation to live into our new Mission Statement: “FPC:E exists to honor God by making more disciples for Jesus Christ.”

This decision was not made lightly. We recognize that each prescription will push all of us beyond what we would choose if our sight were set only on ourselves. Each prescription will bring hope as well as loss. Each prescription is designed to help us fall on our knees and put our trust in the only One *“who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us*. . . so that

. . . *to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.* (Ephesians 3:20-21)

Next steps:

* Pray! *Ask and imagine* how God may create in us “A Heart for our Communities” (our new Vision Statement).
* Stay informed by attending elder-hosted gatherings to be scheduled this summer.
* Work will begin on the sanctuary.
* Preparations are beginning for fall worship and teaching: we encourage everyone to commit to worship and learn together.
* Planning is in the works for children’s ministry this fall.

*“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared*

*for those who love him.”* (Psalm 31:19, 1 Corinthians 2:9)

FAQ:

Q: Wasn’t moving to ECO four years ago meant to be the “magic bullet” to turn us around?

A: No. Moving to ECO placed us in a denomination that is passionate about Kingdom growth and holding churches accountable for making disciples.  At the last two national gatherings, ECO offered resources and financial support to help churches become flourishing once again. Even the CTC is not a magic bullet for growth. As Paul Borden said repeatedly, “Only God can grow the church.” We have the exciting opportunity to partner with Him in this endeavor.

Q: Did the Session already know the prescriptions the consultant would give FPC:E before he came?”

A: No. We knew that we would have a day of repentance, because that is part of the prescription for every church.  Otherwise, the prescriptions were personalized for our congregation. They were based on Paul’s extensive experience and prayerful obedience to the Holy Spirit, as well as his knowledge and analysis of our particular church gleaned from 70+-pages of a FPC:E self-study document, interviews with a significant number of people in the church, information on our website, and numerous recordings of both services.

Q: What will happen to the traditional service, the choir, and the bell choir?

A: We are beginning to dream creatively about how we might provide music leadership for this service in the new year. We will continue to be in dialogue with the music ministries of both services to determine how they will be used this fall during our unique 12-week teaching opportunity on Sunday mornings.

Q: Isn’t putting the Contemporary Service and Children’s Ministry at the same time challenging?

A: Yes, in the short run. The hope is that we will grow to the point that we can provide children’s ministry during each service we offer. As we work toward that goal, saying “yes” to the initiatives is going to require sacrifice from many people, including those who are currently teaching, those who might need to join the teaching teams, and those who will be asked to serve in other ways to fill the voids that arise (e.g. tech team, welcoming/assimilation).  We will offer a make-up teaching each Sunday at 11:05 am this fall for those who serve beyond the sanctuary during the service.

Q: Isn’t this whole thing risky?

A. Yes, it is.

Hebrews 11:8 - *“It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going.”*

2 Timothy 1:7 - *“For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”*

In Christ,

*The FPC:E Session*

Bruce Barney | David Beers | Pam Davis | Sharon Early Deborah Eiche | Ed Fiaschi | Chris Galli | Jean Jenkins Chris Loughridge | David Meza | JD Paff | Linda Willets

Jan Devine | Tim Devine