

Minutes of the NPCC Executive Council Retreat (hybrid meeting)

March 26, 2022

Attendees: Barbara Hunt, Maria Ward, Dave Dawson, Jeff Hunter, Libby Piotrowski, Joel Olfelt, Christine Olfelt, Joanna Sjoblom, Brad Thompson, Laurie Thorpe, Kevin Anderson, Donn Engebretson, Scott Applequist, Sandi Kersten. Guest: Tim Ciccone, former NPCC member and ECC staff for Youth Ministries.

Opening:

Libby read a scripture passage, John 21:4-17, Jesus' directive to "Feed my sheep." She reminded us that we often get caught up in the business of church, focusing much of our attention on financial risks. As a council, we've identified additional issues and priorities for our future – our aging membership, and our need and desire to focus and build on youth and young adult ministries. We must seek to pursue God's agenda for our church and community and feed His sheep. Jeff led in an opening prayer.

Joel – Shared NPCC's mission statement. Our current environment is one that has emerged from a period of unprecedented growth, growing church membership, and unified US. Now, we're in a different socioeconomic period. Faith associations have dropped dramatically, societal norms celebrate diversity rather than common experiences.

In our own setting, worship has continued throughout the pandemic; its format has continued to evolve as pandemic restrictions are lifted. We've made steady progress on church projects and activities throughout the pandemic. How do we invite/attract/serve new people in this changing environment? Our purpose today is to consider next missional steps, including the question of our staffing and possible addition of a full-time staff person for youth/adult ministries):

Tim Ciccone, ECC Director of Youth Ministry

presented via Zoom, his perspective on youth ministry, and staffing options and recommendations:

Having been a member of North Park Church, Tim felt designing a more permanent, full-time staff position for youth ministry would strengthen our church and youth programming. One of the best models for evangelism in the church is done by reaching and caring for families. Families still need support, even in the post-Christian world. The surrounding neighborhood is full of children and youth. He suggested considering a pastor of children, youth and adult ministries, likely continuing with interns for assistance. Seek a seasoned, experienced full-time person for this role.

Tim noted the lack of ethnic diversity in our congregation, in spite of the ethnic diversity of the surrounding neighborhood. Should seek a staff person with demonstrated skill and ability in cross-cultural ministry. This could be a legacy for the church, and a model of evangelistic ministry for the next generation.

To help us understand and address our congregation's lack of ethnic diversity, Tim recommended we begin using the ECC's 6-fold test. Recommend six practices be used to evaluate potential hires, budget decision-making, discipleship narrative.

Tim also recommended two books as helpful reading on youth ministry:

Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church.

3 Big Questions That Change Every Teenager – most current research on youth (he noted the first book, while comprehensive, was published pre-pandemic).

In closing, Tim recommended we consider the “long view” in our discussion on youth ministry and staffing. He recognized NPCC's long-term commitment to children, youth and family ministries, and our desire to serve God in our community, and encouraged us to continue us to build on that legacy.

Questions about staffing across the Northside churches – if we're the only one with a youth minister, will other churches' families “use” our youth ministries (possibly avoiding hiring their own staff and sending kids to our programs)?

Change is needed in our church. Is it time for a new or renewed emphasis on evangelism? We need to shift our focus from being a “legacy” church.

Multi-cultural goal – hard work, and some pain. This will change the tone of the church considerably. Mentioned changes in the music that have been made in recent years, which have made worship more meaningful to younger (40 and under) people.

“Not just making a hire, setting a culture” – talking about diversity, we must also talk about diversity of the nuclear family. Loving the community, as it is, whether it's “traditional” families, or kids, or singles.

Christine Olfelt, Volunteer Minister for Christian Formation

Shared her perspective on connecting with our neighbors and “Telling Our Story”

She pointed out the tension between 3 of Jesus' teachings: Great Commission – go and make disciples, Full social gospel -- love your neighbor as yourself, Loving God --Love your God with all your heart, as we consider our own church's missional priorities.

NPCC has a history as a “cathedral church” – drawing from wider area, established Christians who were comfortable with our style of worship, as a safe haven.

Marketing our strengths – organ and choir, Friendship Center, Stateville connections, tutoring program. How do we get that message out there? If I were new to the neighborhood looking for a church in my community, what would appeal to me?

People need to belong to the church community before they learn to love Jesus...

In our youth ministry, how do we differentiate ourselves from other youth organizations, such as YMCA. Visual cues, such as artwork (inside and outside). We often think how can we share our facility? We can use your help – clean up the neighborhood block party. Unchurched – is it of value to reach non-

believers? Do we really think people need to embrace Christ? How has embracing Christ affected our own lives? Telling stories is the best way to share truth.

Jesus – noticed individuals. We need to notice and listen to people around us. Invite them to gather socially outside the church building.

Working together – neighborhood projects. Faith stories should slip into the conversation as we “tell our story.”

Being an evangelist – how do we form ourselves as evangelists, what staffing do we need to help us? Do we need to add evangelism to the job description?

Important to realize implementing significant changes may be costly (in relationships). There has been a lot of groundwork laid for this shift within the congregation.

Christine – Addressing a comment that we need accountability -- establish some markers (outcomes, goals?), so that we could measure our progress.

Next steps regarding a staffing proposal:

Congregational discernment process is needed, yet balance with important deadlines. Proposal: That several people write up a proposal of where we need to go, and a draft of the type of staffing we need, job description, etc. Bring back to the congregation. Include the work from last Fall’s retreat. (Libby, Jeff?)

Check with current youth/young adult staff regarding their availability to extend?

Include:

- Tentative timing for new position – Fall, 2022, or January, 2023, or Fall, 2023?
- Budget -- \$90,000 total cost to support a \$60,000 salary. Even with discontinuation of mortgage expense, Scott explained we’d have a \$60,000 shortfall in current budget to take on a new full-time position. This is partly due to use of 2021 carryover funds to balance the 2022 budget.
- Background to include for congregation – our situation, and what God is asking us to do? Critical point in the life of NPCC. Information on our giving units, historical and current.
- Average age of the congregation, how many children, families in our current constituency.
- Strategic priorities identified by the Executive Council – strengthen youth ministry, outreach, evangelism. How do we get there?

Next Meeting Date: Town Hall Visioning Meeting on April 24. If possible, can childcare be made available for this meeting.

Further discussion of this proposal and prep for the Town Hall Visioning Meeting will continue at the March EC meeting (prior to Town Hall on April 24).