

Moving Forward in Grace - Steps for a “Church Transformational Experience”

Let’s look at the way we 'do church'.

FOR DISCUSSION



A report from the “Church Discovery Team”

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Key Messages – June 2nd

If you only read one section in this report, please read this one!

The CDT team would like to invite you to read this whole document so you see the steps that were taken by Council up to now. All of this is done for with the desire to see God glorified and has been done to the best of our abilities, under the guidance and direction of the Council of KCCRC.

STOP! This is just a paper with words on it. It is not written in stone.

This section is a short summary of what we have learned to date, and some suggestions we have for moving forward as a community with the desire of further transformation into Jesus Christ's image.

Council invites you to join us in this journey of discovery and we look forward to hearing God's voice spoken through you as you share what God places on your heart. We expect to learn, grow and hear from each other as we move forward to address the unique challenges and opportunities that God has given to the members of Kanata Community CRC.

Blessings & Peace – from the CD Team – Andrea L.,
Aaron H., Marina D. and Ralph V. & KCCRC Council

TRANSFORMATION AS THE GOAL

- That we continue to focus in moving forward with all things our church does so that our goal is on the ongoing transformation of people towards Jesus' character and God's heart.
- That we clearly state that staying the same is not acceptable to God or to the leadership at KCCRC. God expects spiritual growth and works through us to ensure that we are growing.

CHURCH IS NOT ABOUT COMFORT ALONE

- Many challenges we feel are because of God's movement in our lives and in our body, and his call to deeper faithfulness.
- This is normal, and yet we have been trained by our culture to look at stress as something to defend ourselves from.
- We also bought into the thinking that church is to be a comfortable place. This is not biblical; in fact, Christ said we should expect hardship and challenges when we live in deeper relationship with Him and each other. Jesus alone brings us comfort. The work of the church is to transform, which should be a profoundly challenging process.
- We are blessed by the presence of each other and lean on each other as part of our daily experience of faith. Following Jesus was never meant to be done alone.
- We believe we have been called into a new way of being that will bring deeper comfort, deeper relationships, deeper faith and deeper truth. But it will take work and we will need to help each other along.

GROWTH HAPPENS IN RELATIONSHIP

- We believe we must take the spiritual growth steps we are called into as a group, to take some spiritual 'risks' and then to reap the spiritual rewards of deeper relationships with God and with each other. This growth goes hand in hand.
- As we go deeper with God, then we can we go deeper with each other. As our relationships with each other grow and deepen, then our relationship with God can deepen. This is the biblical pattern. This is truth. And this is not always easy. But we believe as a council that it is what we were made for.

THE JOURNEY IS ONGOING

- This is a journey of hearing God's call on our body. Our leadership has always been tasked with determining what is going on in our church, in our society and in our world, and how we adapt to that as a body.
- We are now at the stage where we are asking our body to experience and grow with us, to go on this journey. We also know that we can adapt the plan together as we hear God's clear voice in those movements. This is a step of faith, and we know this work will never be fully done. We are a REFORMING church. God moves & acts, and we follow.

CHANGE IS HARD

- And we ask you all to pray, to work and to enjoy this journey - together. And we will. We, as leadership, commit to you our prayers and lives with you through this. Talk to us. Share with us, be open with us, and be prepared to hear our hearts too.
- Change is hard, and that is OK. We will all listen. When we hear God together, we can and will adapt.

THIS WILL BE AN ADVENTURE AND WILL BRING LIFE

- We as Council are convicted that this is going to be an adventure! This is a step of faith that God will bless. We deeply desire to know you all better, to see wounds of the past healed, and to see us all grow.
- The changes listed in this document to how our Sunday Morning service will flow is a concrete way of helping us do this in a busy life, and busy world!

How do we do it? We start with this. We propose:

Our Sunday morning Worship service will be modified to contain time for discussion about the message. Questions provided by the Pastor are meant to focus us on the application of the message in our daily lives using a round table approach. The details are to be worked out in concert with the congregation, Worship Committee, Worship Leaders, the CDT Team & the Council of KCCRC. Ideally, we would start in September.

Where did this come from?

We started looking at small groups and growing in our connections with our community, but it became clear that we needed to look at personal transformation and discipleship.

The CDT team was tasked with finding out how to implement ideas to allow for more personal transformation. Through months of collaboration with council and working it out, we are now ready to discuss what we have discerned together.

May 10 Update – Meeting with Council

Since this proposal has been sent to council, a number of Elders meetings and Council meetings have been held to discuss its merits and challenges. This is all part of our move as a council to become more transparent and to show the history and formation of this proposal, not just the finished product.

First things first. Our original dates were overly ambitious and a lot of valid questions were raised that needed answers to proceed. Any dates originally proposed were scrapped as we were moving forward in grace with each other, giving us time to absorb and question to ensure that this was indeed God's calling on our body, and to carefully articulate our way forward.

At the end of our May 10th council meeting, the following summary was given:

- It was agreed when the elders met with the CD team on March 7 that the round table approach was perceived as an excellent “vehicle” to bring the Prayer Action Plan to a discussion in an interactive setting, which was the original plan that was adopted a year ago; therefore some of the elders feel that we should start out with discussing the prayer action plan.
- Given the difficulty that we had in presenting this well to the congregation, jumping right into the prayer action plan this way we felt might not be well received.
- We were reminded that the **primary reason** for the round table approach is to help initiate **personal transformation** so that we transform into a church based in strong **relationships with God and people**, not performance or structure. The entire congregation needs to be encouraged to understand, experience and work on this, *because if we can't see the need for strong relationships and build them, how are we going to do that in the community, most of whom we do not know?*

The Elders and Worship Committee need to own the steps and assist the Pastor. Even though the startup date is targeted for September, we need to hold this entire plan loosely, allowing God to shift it and to speak through the congregation, and to expect that!

The CDT team was also tasked with aiding with the communication, discussion and eventual roll out of a more detailed plan, contained within this document in the following section.

Possible Ways of Moving Forward

We as a CD team have some ideas about how to move forward. Where do we start?

- Congregational sharing – to share with the body our current state, work done, progress made.
- present at the Spring Congregational meeting
- Respect the congregation through this progress and expect to hear God in their voices, but also expect to hear the fear of change and our humanity. It will take careful deliberation to understand which is which, and we must travel that road together.
- Ralph Vandenberg has offered to share the overview and how he sees God placing us on this path.
- Council also believes it is important over the summer to experience this format change by holding events so we can practice a round table approach.
- share this document with the congregation
- plan to provide small group opportunities over the summer to resource the congregation

Council direction includes the directive that this be worked in such a way as to be an ongoing transformational experience, and to that end, we should make this our regular way of meeting, as living out the message will be made more possible among us if the new format is used weekly rather than once a month. We would not experience the differences if it was only once a month and could even discourage more people from joining in as the change from week to week would be disorienting.

An idea is to look at an August start gearing services to the new format; the first few sessions could deal with the new format and allow people to talk about their concerns and fears; need all Council to answer questions; make all documentation available; list resources; making small groups and reviewing resources.

Over the summer, at least two small groups will be running to help resource our congregation:

1. Reggie McNeil's "The Present Future" will be offered to those who want to see what relational faith in action might look like, and why at this point in history it's what our world needs.
2. A 6 week small group working through some exciting material called "Interactions" which resources us by helping us answer to the question "What do good relationships look like?" Addressing our relationships with God and with people.

We will consult with the congregation as to what they need resourcing in and will look to have even more small groups formed based on that feedback.

We expect to develop a multi-generational experience where teens, kids, youth and adults of all ages can grow and share in relationship.

Council's decision is to move ahead with the round table concept as recommended by the CD

Team because we feel we have heard God leading us, and we see the need. We need to be the church God has called us to be, not some other church – we are KCCRC and God has put us in this place at this time for such a task as this. We need a venue in which to lead people further into change, with **transformation** as the goal.

This is not a replacement of small groups. This is a way of allowing us to shift our minds to the importance of relationship with God and with each other. We're combining worship with the round table approach to facilitate growth and sharing.

It is also agreed that after 6 months, council will formally review this change and make further recommendations. Practically speaking, both the CDT team and the Elders and Council will continue to meet to adapt to what God is telling us through his people.

1. Congregational Culture

It is good and important for us to know both the **culture** we belong to (in the wider community that we serve) and the unique **church culture** we inhabit.

We believe that there are impacts of culture shifts that we are being impacted and affected by, primarily *subconsciously*. We want to bring some of those things to the surface so that we can become aware of them.

Culture is playing a huge role in shaping the attitudes of people in our neighborhoods and in our congregation – kids, adults & youths. Some people are being shaped more deeply than others. We have seen, and have stories of changes such as:

- distrust, and sometimes even fear of **hierarchical authority** (*think of the strong attitudes around politicians, and realize that church culture probably picks up some of that attitudinal shift*)
- a move to deeper **individualism** (*I am the centre*)
- our **consumer mentality** (*church is a product to be consumed, evaluated, and discarded if not right for 'me'*)

The result of all these things however, if we compare to how things were done 20 years ago to today is that **expectations are different**.

No longer do *all* people want to be told what to do, and expect leadership to lead them strictly by telling them what to do. (*Although some still do...*) We all know of different churches that experience this very differently. This is recognition of our particular **experience and people** at KCCRC.

What further complicate matters is that many of us have very **traditional thinking patterns** and expectations (*conservative evangelical with immigrant background and mentality – we know how to build, protect and preserve our own cultural needs*), which then begins to meet with some of the new cultural expectations and we see **strong interactions** that can result in **clashes and conflicts**.

Some examples of those might be: Bylaw #3 handling / pastoral care expectations / people leaving the church because it doesn't "meet *their* needs".

These are all possible examples, and although this is simplistic (reality is always more complicated), but it does go part of the way to describing some the struggles we get into.

These issues may become **heightened** if we begin to enfold more community people because of our sense of desire to reach out into our community. (Based in transition report document).

SUGGESTION #1

*We suggest that as a church we must begin to become more aware of the **impact of our culture** in Canada on all of us. Further study and the creation of a team sent to do this study work and report back to the elders and the council soon.*

This may explain why this congregation has experienced demographic shifts and does not have as many younger people in it.

This needs further study.

The working reality is that currently we have a **mix of value systems** at play in people. This will impact how we do things.

Not everyone thinks the same about what traditionally would be non-issues.

We should also remember that **not everything is bad** in these cultural shifts.

For example, in that same shift, there are aspects of it that result in some people desiring *more participation*. Some people also want more **engagement in decision making**. Others desire **deeper relationships**. A key for many to spiritual growth now centers on **authenticity** of experiences.

Some examples of shifts at work can be seen in our history. Our recent history as a church shows that when at KCCRC proposals are presented as finished works, the congregation **does not fully absorb them as their own**. Some evidence of that would be the prayer action plan and perhaps the transition team plan. It might be the idea of **individual ownership** and buy-in of plans (*individual passion for God's plans and work*) **vs. corporate ownership of plans** (*which might mean people believe that elders & deacons should really do the work – the idea of ministry professionals – ministry 'outsourcing'*).

Even though we were very aggressive at involving people in the planning phases of the transition team, we had a lot of cultural baggage that we had not talked about or addressed (like **leadership style expectations, pastor expectations**, and WHO is going to **implement our plans** (*leadership, or individuals?*))

These are all challenges.

Therefore, the CDT carefully worked through how important it was that even if we as a leadership group believed that: I. *small groups*

& II. *Mission oriented approaches* were very important to the health and depth of our spiritual walk, faithfulness to God, discipleship, and even might address many of our cultural, spiritual and practical concerns; we also recognize that **this needs to be worked out among all of us**.

Existing churches like ours need to discern our own place in order that all our members (or as many as is possible!) will have the passion and heart and investment, so that each of us can adapt and grow into any approach God leads us to, while using our gifts, passion & heart that God has provided to our congregation for **His** glory.

SUGGESTION #2

Our congregation needs more than just buy-in. They need full participation and full engagement in the questions.

We firmly believe that God can and will **use a variety of church forms and styles**, and that all of them can and will be used by God and is *required* for God's ongoing Kingdom work.

Our job as a community is to discern what shape **we** can take to best fulfill God's plans for our church.

Even though as a CDT team, we were tasked to look at "Missional Church" and "Small Groups", we recognize that there is a need for a series of steps to go through as a congregation where we begin **with full participation** in:

*Examining our history for
God's fingerprints,

Learning to ask **new**
questions,

Being presented truth of our
existing Status quo
(**Christendom vs. following
Christ**)*

Then to -

*Go through a discernment
exercise to following God

See where He
is already working, then

Joining him there
by making some kind of
change of **behaviors &
structures.***

How can we do this together? We believe the answer is in **asking the right Questions.** **Questions** will guide us to how and where we are to engage our world, and how to follow God into where he is already at work.

The 'standard model of church' that we have grown up and experienced is one model that

has served the church well. But the new question is – a question that needs to be asked in **EVERY** time period – is – *Does our model of church still serve God, and us, and our communities - FULLY? In our current culture and time?*

Some the standard patterns that we have identified that other forms of church might call into question are:

- Have Churches become simply a **dispenser of Religious Goods and Services** (is church simply a weekly spiritual 'fix'?)
- Should mature Christians come only to be fed on a weekly basis? When do they 'shift gears' into **being leaders and serving others?**
- Should **professionals** be hired to do all the work, including mission?

We as a CDT team think there is a lot more out there for us to look at based on our study of mission focused approaches. The question remains however – is the congregation?

If we were to move to any model, this should only be done with the discernment of the body and discernment of leadership.

This is a journey that we believe will take several months just to begin to ask the right questions.

Only together can we learn to ask new questions. And for that, we need to know where we currently are.

2. A congregation in flux?

We believe that most in our congregation feel something is **off**, but find it difficult to articulate what is going wrong.

Some will articulate what they believe is wrong, and may only be **scratching the surface** or trying to **place blame**.

Instead of jumping to conclusions, we must **discern these things together**.

Our committee believes that there are many possible factors, but the **mutual care and seeking together** is far more important than finding blame. Blame is looking backwards. We are interested in **building a new future**.

Here is an example of the steps that we recommend our congregation work through:

Step 1 : We need to share our fears, concerns and struggles

Step 2 : We need to be exposed to new ideas, possibilities and options

Step 3: We need to discern which approaches we are drawn to, and why

Step 4: Build the structures required to move to the new reality.

Ongoing: We need to have hope for a new future.

As a short example, we can flush out SOME examples of things we expect to hear about and should address. Each of these contemporary issues can be addressed by sermons, book study, speakers and by searching out more answers as a church.

We don't have to have answers ready for all of these things, but we do want the church body

to come on the journey of exploring these questions for themselves and as a body.

Any new structures or formats to how we do church have to be done **TOGETHER** for them to be sustainable and to fit the biblical model (see section 4).

Example concerns which are very important for us to discuss together that may come up (we could call these the 'surface questions' not because they are not important, but because they don't go to the root of the issue – but we still need to discuss them!)

Why are my **children** not coming to church?

What might have caused our church **membership** levels to shrink?

What is being done about **pastoral care** in our body?

What place do charismatic experiences have in God's church?

Whose job is it to make sure I **grow** spiritually?

What role does the **pastor** have?

Are any topics - off limits?

Whose job is it to **encourage and promote** leadership?

Our hope is that those questions (above) would lead us to **new** questions (better questions!) That might shed further light on the questions above. For example:

Do we feel **unconditionally** loved by God?

- *If so, what do we do with it?*

- *If not, why not?*

What is the **purpose of church?**

Who is church for?

What is my **role in church?**

Is the Holy Spirit active today? How?

Why do we need a relationship with God?

Why do we need relationships with others?

3. Paradigms in Flux

***Paradigm** - A set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them.*

Patterns of thinking (called paradigms) have a huge impact on how we view church, as does recognition that there may be a **difference** between our traditions vs. God's intention & the scriptural call. We have to be open to learning to see these patterns.

If we are serious about following God, we also believe that we are called into reaching out to our culture. And to reach the culture we need to understand the paradigms our culture also operates under.

These are BIG questions. But they have to be asked. Here is a list of TWO possible paradigm shifts. What others do you see? Only in meeting together can we begin to discover answers.

Paradigm #1

Who is church for?

Is it for me, and my needs, or is it instead for others?

C.S. Lewis once said that *"the church is the only organization that exists for the benefit of non-members."*

If church is for me, what needs is it meeting? Should those needs be met in other ways?

Paradigm #2

What is good leadership?

Our **Leadership paradigm** is certainly in flux these days.

An example is how we view our Pastoral care focus. Whose job is it to care for us? Can/should pastors be the only ones doing pastoral care?

The CDT has recognized that we as a church are struggling in certain patterns specifically around leadership. In order to move forward, we need to answer many questions. Some of those are:

In our leadership roles, **WHO does what?**

What is the role of best practices in how we do our work?

Is continuous learning & study important?

Do we look to see what the Spirit is doing in our lives and community?

What are our discernment mechanisms – how do we see God? **HOW do we make decisions?**

What is the role & place of tradition? Is it separate **from mission?**

What is our view of our world and how should we relate to it **WHO are we? WHAT is service?**

What is the church for? / What is its purpose?

WHAT IS my responsibility as a member of Christ's body? What is council's role in that?

Whose job is it that I grow spiritually?

Might pastors be focused on empowering & mentoring leadership instead?

4. A Biblical Example for 'discerning Action' - our model for decision making - Acts 15 - a walk through:

We also wanted to give some context for what the CDT team is doing inside what we think is a helpful biblical model. This is not to say that God doesn't operate in different ways in different times, but this pattern of reaching out to the congregation seemed to be different enough from how we normally do things, that we felt it was important to see that there is nothing "New" about what we are doing.

SUGGESTION #3

Always seek out God's wisdom. Discern if this pattern is helpful; learn to trust sub-committees to do God's work like you trusted the CDT team.

Empower People, Commission People, and Trust God.

There are people who love to research, people tasked to pray, and people sent out to do work. Let's work with and find all of God's gifted people!

ACTS 15 vs. 1: A question is posed

1 Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved."

2. Differing views are presented

2 This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.

3. Body creates an 'ad-hoc' committee to examine the issue by seeing and examining what God is doing in their context (read & study, direct questioning, surveys, best practices, et cetera). Sharing happens in both directions as the news is shared, people learn and hear what God is doing.

3 The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the believers very glad. 4 When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.

5 Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses."

6 The apostles and elders met to consider this question. 7 After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. 8 God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. 9 He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. 10 Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke

that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? 11 No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”

12 The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them.

4. Leaders (Elders & gifted ones) in the church attempt to summarize what is learned and discerned and then it is shared with the body.

13 When they finished, James spoke up. “Brothers,” he said, “listen to me. 14 Simon [a] has described to us how God first intervened to choose a people for his name from the Gentiles. 15 The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written:

16 “After this I will return and rebuild David’s fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it,

17 that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things [b]—

18 things known from long ago. [c]

19 “It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. 20 Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. 21 For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.”

5. The whole church (leadership AND body) creates a go-forward strategy TOGETHER only after they recognize that the approach “seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us”.

22 Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, men who were leaders among the believers. 23 With them they sent the following letter:

The apostles and elders, your brothers,
To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia:
Greetings.

24 We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. 25 So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul— 26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing. 28 It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: 29 You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things.

Farewell.

5. The church is encouraged & strengthened by the decision.

30 So the men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. 31 The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message. 32 Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers. 33 After spending some time there, they were sent off by the believers with the blessing of peace to return to those who had sent them. [34]

[d] 35 But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, where they and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord.

5. A Suggestion to Move Forward

SUGGESTION #4

In the summer, we suggest that we take several opportunities (publish list of dates and questions ahead of time to congregation!) to have Sunday Morning church service look something like this:

Church is setup with chairs around round tables (perhaps with coffee to share as soon as people come into church?)

1. Worship & Singing Time
2. Sunday School for Kids
3. Offering
4. Message from God's Word
5. Discuss questions to dig deeper into the message using the round table approach
6. Although we see the round table discussions as integral to the service, those who choose to leave are free to do so here...
7. Round Table Discussions

Possible elements to be included in the Round Table discussions:

- 6-8 people per table, facilitator/recorders
 - resulting thoughts, questions and applications to be forwarded to leadership for compilation, review and possible incorporation into future messages
8. Singing in a closing song
 9. Children dismissed at the 1.5h mark from Sunday School
 10. Continuing with discussion if people desire with people free to wrap up

SUGGESTION #5

With input from the congregation via previous gatherings and discussions, the Elders and the Pastor will work on developing messages and questions that we as a community can work out together. It is our goal that we grow in faith and knowledge and service. Out of this will also come how we will address the pressing needs of God through our congregation and community!

The CD team is committed to working with council and the pastor to resource us answering those questions together. We want to be guided by the Holy Spirit, Scripture and Christ. The CD team wants to resource our church by providing it with helpful videos, speakers, books and tools that will help us grow through these questions. After going through these steps of learning together, we think we will need to enter a time of discernment together. This journey is still not completely clear to us, but that is OK as we will continue to grow and learn and seek God out through all these steps together.

Two questions have been identified by the CDT team that will kick off the conversations. The two questions are:

1. What is the purpose of Church?
2. What is my role in Church?

The Elders and the pastor research scripture, openings and introductions to these questions and help us by preparing the congregation ahead of time so they can wrestle with these questions before coming on a Sunday.

This is where we are to date. We look forward to discussing this with you in more detail Thursday June 9th. Lets begin the dialog and do not hesitate to ask any questions!

CDT & KCCRC Council