

**PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION CAFES:
*implications for the strategic framework in Derek Evans' report***

Presented to Fraser Presbytery March 6, 2009

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Overview of the consultations

Approximately 350 people attended four meetings held in Surrey, Langley, Abbotsford and Chilliwack.

Conversations focused on values and what was important for the Church

Results were reviewed by volunteers who were present at the meetings and the Steering Committee. They reviewed the results in the light of the strategic framework.

This report is a preliminary accounting of what we discovered with respect to the mission, key directions and core competencies and contains suggestions for moving forward based on what the attendees shared.

MISSION

A mission for the task at hand

What it could mean

Proposed Mission from Evans Report:

“The Mission of Fraser Presbytery is to foster genuine, inclusive Christian community by providing excellent ministry and an alternative, welcoming, non-judgmental spiritual home for individuals and groups who feel excluded or marginalized”.

**We do not need a new mission for the United Church in the Fraser Valley—
we need a mission for the kind of change we need to collectively undertake.**

MISSION

To face our present and future reality and make choices that leave us thriving, vital, living and sustainable.

Thriving congregations—
vital to the community—
alive as followers of Jesus Christ—
sustainable for the future.

Thriving means congregations that are growing, self sustaining and exploring new ways to be; it means being vibrant, full, energetic, and giving back more than is received.

Vital means that we support abundant life in the world around us, working in important and needed ways to care for the people and communities of which we are a part.

Living means that we seek the presence of God in our congregational life and, as followers of Jesus Christ, that we continue to worship in theologically inclusive communities of faith.

Sustainable means caring for the legacy that been left to us and passing that legacy on to the next generation of people so that they too can choose their path forward in meeting the challenges of the world as thriving, vital and living communities of faith.

KEY DIRECTIONS: WHERE WE MIGHT CHOOSE TO GO

Polarities

Where we might choose to go

Key Directions from the Evans report

Away from relatively autonomous congregational units, and toward a more integrated and coordinated denominational presence across the Presbytery;

Away from a system of oversight and direction that is volunteer based and human resource-intensive, and toward more stream-lined systems and professional management;

Away from dispersed, generalized, duplicated and overextended facilities and staff resources, and toward a more strategically focused, specialized and programmatic capacity

| Bonding relationships | Bridging relationships |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Much like a family | Openly welcoming |
| Maintaining tight knit communities | Progressive and socially active |
| Caring for ageing congregations | Theologically inclusive |
| | Desiring of youth |
| <i>(inwardly active)</i> | <i>(outwardly active)</i> |

There is a polarity here between being inwardly active and outwardly active.

| UPSIDES | |
|---|--|
| <i>(Inwardly Active)</i> | <i>(Outwardly Active)</i> |
| <p>Close knit family feeling</p> <p>Autonomy; focusing on congregational needs and resources</p> <p>Standing for something.</p> <hr/> <p>low profile; limited focus on outreach;</p> <p>Low trust of others and a limited ability to work with other Churches</p> <p>Seems exclusive; hard to interest new members and increase diversity</p> | <p>Active, high profile, social outreach in a diverse world</p> <p>Working, learning and collaborating with others</p> <p>Theologically inclusive, embodying openness</p> <hr/> <p>Declining congregational cohesion</p> <p>Autonomy wanes</p> <p>Being all things to all people</p> |

DOWNSIDES

KEY DIRECTIONS: WHERE WE MIGHT CHOOSE TO GO

Outward

Working more together between churches in the Fraser Presbytery to worship together and collaborate on the challenges we face at the congregational level. Working together with other Churches in the Presbytery to undertake a broader social ministry on regional issues.

Inward

Finding new ways to share professional resources so that the volunteer base of the congregations can focus on thriving congregational life. More truly intergenerational congregations and initiatives in which adults, youth, seniors and children are working, learning and worshipping together.

CORE COMPETENCIES: THINGS WE NEED TO LEARN HOW TO DO

For the Presbytery

For Churches

Core competencies from the Evans Report

- a. *An approach to planning and congregational development that is integrated and coordinated, including in relation to financing, facilities and staffing;*
- b. *The development of a capacity for multicultural outreach and ministry, distinct from the traditional segregated approach to ethnic ministries;*
- c. *The development and implementation of a public outreach and promotional strategy based on projection of a clear and distinctive United Church identity;*
- d. *The provision and support of professional capacity (executive leadership and personnel management) and ministry personnel skilled in and dedicated to youth and family ministry;*
- e. *The ability to mobilize resources from the existing asset base of the United Church in the Presbytery for reinvestment in support of a comprehensive, mission-focused, strategic approach.*

CORE COMPETENCIES: WHAT CAN PRESBYTERY OFFER?

Specialized ministry capacity to focus on youth and create truly intergenerational ministries.

Professional management available to free up volunteers and ministers to focus on the mission.

Such competencies would include finance, capital and asset management and would be available to all churches within the Presbytery.

A capacity to animate and support more collaboration between congregations to enable congregations to work with and learn from each other.

Specialized competency to work with grief as the congregations face significant changes, and inspiration as congregations rise to meet challenges.

A collective voice and visible presence for the United Church in this region.

CORE COMPETENCIES: WHAT CAPACITIES CAN CONGREGATIONS DEVELOP?

Ongoing inquiry and reflection on the mission and key directions.

Connecting and collaborating with other Churches nearby and Presbytery wide for worship, outreach and new work together.

Creation of new initiatives to involve youth and young families

Strong local voices and presence.

PROCESS AND THE WAY FORWARD

What the people are saying about the process: time, decision-making, and trust.

Ways to begin planning and building capacity.

Time

There needs to be more time for Churches to work together, consider the implications of this work and participate in the future. Go slow and don't proceed on the basis that the scenarios in the Evans report are options.

Decision-making

Decision making about the future of individual churches should rest with each individual congregation. Each congregation must be free to decide its future and to steward the assets and resources in its care.

Trust

Presbytery and congregations need to develop deeper trust with each other to bring the mission to life. This means working more collaboratively together.

No one is served by an "us vs, them" mentality between Presbytery and congregations. The mission of this endeavour is served best by having Presbytery and congregations working side by side to enable all churches to do more together than they could otherwise do alone.

A WAY TO BEGIN

For Churches

Convene conversations with Churches in each cluster to brainstorm and select initiatives that can be done together. What are the bold steps we can take to transform our congregations to vital spiritual centres for the community?

Initiate an ongoing reflection about the mission of this work, so that the congregation develops the capacity to explore the implications of a new path forward, and discusses the ways in which this vitality and abundant life can return to the Church. A large part of this dialogue is considering who we are in relation to the other congregations in this Presbytery

For Presbytery

Begin by surveying the churches to explore which areas of management and operations would better be served by professional assistance hosted by the Presbytery on behalf of all Fraser Presbytery churches.

Set aside a time at regular Presbytery meetings to inquire into the mission identify and check in on key indicators and explore what more can be done to help the Churches in their work and mission.

A CONCLUSION, AND A BEGINNING

The essence of what we learned was that the people of the United Churches of the Fraser Presbytery, as followers of Jesus Christ within the United Church of Canada want to serve God and to build congregations that thrive as vital spiritual centres and theologically inclusive and abundantly alive communities of faith.

People are willing to have a hard look at the reality and to face it with optimism, fearlessness, creativity and determination to choose a path forward that is reflective of the mission to bring abundant life back to the Churches of the Fraser Presbytery.

No one is under the illusion that the way forward will be easy, but the overwhelming sense is that we cannot tread the path alone if we are to be

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vital to the community—

alive as followers of Jesus Christ—

sustainable for the future.