

PRESBYTERY FEEDBACK

Responses to Presentation – 18 Oct 2008

DOES IT MATTER WHETHER THERE IS A UNITED CHURCH PRESENCE IN THE REGION IN 10 OR 20 YEARS?

IF SO, WHY & FOR WHOM?

- It matters to current Seniors, but who likely won't be alive in 10-20 years.
- It matters to have a “progressive Christian presence committed to social justice & active in the community – an alternative voice.
- It matters because we provide care & support for homeless & vulnerable people.
- It matters to lower income people because the community would lose cheap rental space for things such as child care, pre-school. See providing space a ministry.
- Yes, because we tend to move toward inclusion. With the increased variety of people coming to our area we need to increase our inclusion & welcome.
- Yes, it is important to the community – to social outreach.
- To me it is not crucial to have UC presence; what matters to me is to have a non-judgemental spiritual community.
- It matters to God.
- It matters to have an inclusive voice in the Valley – inclusiveness for a purpose.
- Yes, to provide a safe place for inclusion of gays & lesbians.
- Yes, to our children & grandchildren
- Yes, to spread the good news of hope & love & acceptance & peace in a world which so deeply needs it.
- Yes, because we offer a different ethos – flexibility, autonomy, progressive views.
- Because a loss of anything matters.
- Inclusion – someone can just walk in off the street and be welcome.
- Yes, to Seniors, because of tradition.
- Yes, to people with different sexual orientation because they are accepted.
- It matters to youth because they are able to learn, question and grow in their faith.
- I think we need a presence for those people who don't fit in the “norm” of societal / dogma driven religions – “minorities” such as gays, bisexuals, etc.
- Yes, because the United Church provides space for multiculturalism. Denominationalism is defunct. We embrace people from other faiths and cultures. We learn about world religions and loving your neighbour. We work with other faiths rather than trying to convert them. We need to be more secure about who we are and let people know who we are.
- Yes, because the UC is an alternate voice of Christianity. There is a spiritual hunger for an inclusive, non-judgemental, Jesus-style of ministry. Big churches don't deliver this. But we have to step up and make ourselves known.
- Yes, because we need to be there for the 30-45 year olds when they need to re-engage their spiritual journeys.
- Yes, because we need to respect and be there for the aging congregations, need to maintain core beliefs.

- Yes. We provide an alternate point of view to fundamentalism.
- For whom? For us!
- Yes, because of our broad understanding of Christian theology and our willingness to interact with other faith. We need to claim what is specific to Christianity and understand what is unique in other faiths in an atmosphere of mutual respect.
- Yes, very much. We have to learn about other cultures and be ready to welcome them. It is not necessary to convert anyone to anything. We all believe in one God. Our pathway to God is an individual choice. There are no rights or wrongs.
- Yes, it matters to those looking for something different (gays, liberal open-minded people) and wanting to make a difference, a place to be needed and challenged, a place to move outside ourselves, a place for spiritual nurture.
- Yes, that there be an alternate voice @ Christian theology and ethics – alternative to the dominant conservative evangelical one. If the UCC can be that, great. If it can't, we may be losing who we are.
- Yes, because when folks get to a certain age they need (pastorally) a pastoral home that is more liberal/open.
- For whom? People who care about or are GBLT. For anyone who doesn't find a place in the "box". For folks who need a place they can call home in life's transitions.
- Yes, if we can deeply be the "welcoming, non-judgemental spiritual home" that is called to something more: the prophetic, environmental stuff, something like who we used to be and are not now. To no longer be another voice within Christendom, but a loud "passionate remnant" on the outside of Christendom. To be anchored on spiritual giftedness within a "spiritual home" that can then send us out to do our ministry – VOCATION for all believers. The purpose of the church is not to coddle ourselves but to give our life away to those who will follow us.

WHAT DEGREE OR EXTENT OF CHANGE ARE YOU WILLING TO SUPPORT?

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- I support closing some churches to make a stronger UC presence.
- Go all the way – B or C.
- Open to lots of change – but may not have the imagination.
- Open to major change.
- Would have a hard time letting go of my congregation, but open to some collaboration – maybe B.
- I will support whatever happens.
- I would be ready to close a few congregations, but not many. A central, large church would be nice.
- We need neighbourhood churches, where we can walk to church.
- We need to trim things down so the church can survive.
- Maybe B – some smaller churches might need to close, we do need to share resources more, and meeting in homes is a good idea. But cannot imagine C. Need to preserve the smaller community – that is the most important thing. Regional approach involves too much travel and public transit does not exist in many places.

A Future for United Church Ministry in the Fraser Valley

- We maybe need to have a mix of large and small that work in concert with each other, so that people have choices.
- I envision almost a medieval model – an abbey or cathedral with small groups around it. The basis still needs to be the caring community and pastoral care. Or perhaps like the Health Authority with smaller community facilities that have a partnership with a larger hub facility.
- I support drastic change – large church with small group ministries.
- I support major change – combining churches in an area.
- I support medium change – want big church model but would like to keep feeling of smaller congregations.
- I support medium change – really want to keep the smaller church but know it is not possible financially.
- I like the idea of multiple staffs who can work to their strengths. Rather than a jack of all trades be a master of one.
- I support radical change. Still need to serve local communities, but in terms of the modern population centres.
- We need to PAY many more workers. Support a small team of ministers, and have centralized finance & accounting.
- I would generally support C as I understand it (streamlined processes, house churches with regional ministry resources, perhaps four regional centres, meeting with 20 or 30 people in a passion group, healthy groups of community nurture). We would probably need a different training model.
- I am willing to support change with STRONG strategic vision beyond connection to existing congregations. Don't know what the model would look like, except: more staff less volunteer.
- I lean toward A but could move toward B because I believe it is more faithful – and more realistic than C.
- I support a “centres of excellence” model, and using new technology to deliver UC presence to isolated areas.
- We are spiritually challenged to come to terms with our deep unwillingness to move forward and let doors close so that others may open. Can we be brutally honest about who we are and market that? This is the direction I would support.
- I am willing to go gig. I see the value of doing this, though I wonder about process and capacity.
- I see a high value in local community, + excellent outreach and big profile. So, if there's a way to do that together I can buy in. That is probably model B. I would support a process that involves people making their own decisions about which way they could go rather than imposing change from “above”.
- We are already doing model B, and I am not willing to go back to the drawing board around this.
- I like the “practicing congregations” model of DB Bass where growth happens through congregational discipleship. We need to work on the administrative duplication of the current model.
- Presbytery's mission statement is a lie. The very structure of our church prevents us from supporting congregations and ministry personnel as they make disciples of Jesus.