

## **Culture of Abundance Innovation Team Report**

### **Identifying the Condition**

We commonly associate the word “business” with a profession, trade or occupation or an enterprise which is run for profit. At its root, however, “business” meant something with which a person or organization was occupied. When we tell someone to “mind their own business” we are telling them to pay attention to that which we feel they have a right to be occupied.

Using that definition of “business”, the Culture of Abundance Innovation Team determined that some of our members don’t understand what business our church is in or appreciate how good the church is at its business. In other words, some of our members do not perceive the way that our church fosters and nurtures discipleship and the great things that we are doing for the Kingdom of God. That lack of perception leads to the impression that we are not doing what God is calling us to do. That impression fosters a feeling of scarcity.

If we can make our people aware of all the church is already doing to further the Kingdom we can break the feeling of scarcity and begin to move towards a Culture of Abundance. Encouraging our people to look up at our successes rather than down at shortcomings will put the church on an upward trajectory. On that trajectory we will see spiritual growth, a more active involvement in the life of our church by more of our members and friends, and an increase in financial participation.

The Culture of Abundance Innovation Team is proposing two goals – the creation of an awareness of the abundance with which God has blessed our church and planning for abundance. If those goals are accomplished, the Team believes that we will start our church on the path towards a Culture of Abundance.

## **GOALS AND ACTION STEPS**

### **1. Create an awareness of the abundance with which God has blessed our church**

Resources – We have a deep well of talent and treasure

Fellowship – Bible study, Christian education, groups and circles, service opportunities

Action Steps:

**A. Create a Communications Team.** To create an awareness of and appreciation for the abundance that God has blessed us we need to be intentional about the way that leadership communicates with the congregation. Our communications will be the most effective if the style in which messages are presented is positive, intentional and consistent.

Leadership communicates to the congregation verbally and in writing. Verbal communication can be either a formal presentation or a casual conversation. Either way how a message is phrased can either promote or hinder the perception that our church is abundantly blessed. Some of the members of the Communications Team should be Abundance Facilitators. The Abundance Facilitators will help teach officers, committee members and staff (other than pastors) to speak to members of the congregation in ways that promote the perception of abundance. The pastors will also be encouraged to preach and teach in ways that raise that perception.

The best way to ensure that written communications are done in the appropriate style is to have them drafted by the Communications Team (with input from staff and committees). The Communications Team will write the articles in Parish Life and 1<sup>st</sup> Word, web content and other announcements. Having members of the Communications Team do that writing will allow our paid staff to concentrate on other areas of ministry.

Consistent messaging might include the use of a tag line in verbal and written communications. A verbal tag line might be something like “That’s what abundance looks like to me.” In written communications we could borrow the hashtag idea from social media. Written messages (including the graphic communications mentioned below) might end in #jesuswins or #inspire.

**Timeframe:** 6 – 12 months to recruit and train the members of the Communication Team. Ideally the team would consist of a Team Leader, 2-3 Abundance Facilitators and 4-5 writers.

**Cost:** Minimal

**B. Produce a Positive Graphic Campaign.** One of the best ways to raise our awareness of abundance is to highlight the ways that our church helps to further the Kingdom. The Graphic Campaign will consist of pictures and captions (similar to Power Point slides). Each picture will tell part of the story of the life of our church. The idea would be to have a new picture each week. The weekly picture would be presented electronically before and after service on the screens in the balcony of the Sanctuary and in the Chapel and the Sunday School rooms and during the coffee hour in Social Hall. Ideally we would find a place to put an additional screen or two in locations that would be seen by people that attend the Sanctuary but not coffee hour.

**Timeframe:** 7 – 13 months to start, 10 – 16 months to be fully implemented. The Communications Team would be tasked with producing the pictures. It would probably take a month for the team to produce the first batch of pictures and figure out how to get them on the screens.

**Cost:** Minimal (the infrastructure is largely in place) unless additional screens are purchased and mounted (including the necessary cabling).

**C. Plan a Sunday of Service.** Working together with other members of the congregation forms deeper bonds than sitting in the same pew or sharing a cup of coffee in Fellowship Hall. If the congregation grows together as a family, our abundance in dedicated disciples of Christ will become more apparent. In lieu of a traditional worship service, plan a Sunday where members would meet at church and then be sent out to perform pre-selected service projects for the “least of these.” The congregation would be given the opportunity to have input into the type of work that would be done and to offer suggested projects. There would be a planning team to pick the sites and arrange for the necessary materials to be on hand. The cost of the materials would be borne by the members of the work group that was doing a particular job.

**Timeframe:** 12-18 months to form a planning team, develop a structure, solicit input from the congregation, and identify and resource projects.

**Cost:** Minimal

**D. Mission Fellowship.** We are called to build up the Kingdom by touching the lives of people outside of our walls. We support a large number of local missions. Many of the members of our congregation are not aware of the work that some of those missions do. The Mission Fellowship program would bring in a representative of one of the missions and/or missionaries that we support and give them 2-3 minutes to speak in worship and a longer time to speak and answer questions in an accessible and inviting space during the coffee hour.

**Timeframe:** 3 - 4 months to start to form a Mission Fellowship team and to work with the Mission Committee to identify and invite missions and missionaries to come speak and then ongoing.

**Cost:** Minimal

**E. Plan a Celebration Sunday.** Plan for a celebration during fellowship hour where we can reflect on the work that the church was able to accomplish in the previous year. It would be appropriate to have this celebration in the weeks leading up to Lent to allow for enough time to analyze the prior year and prepare an appropriate presentation. The team planning that event would take care of the details but Mardi Gras theme would be appropriate given the timing.

**Timing:** Begin planning November, 2016 for a celebration in February or March, 2017.

**Cost:** Up to \$200 for handouts of the presentation, food and decorations.

**F. Educate.** Many members of our congregation have been blessed with an abundance of talent and / or treasure. We all have the same 24 hours in our day. Are we using our talent, treasure and time effectively? Is there a way to reprioritize or reframe our thinking to free up more of our resources for the work of the Lord? Those our questions that we can ask our congregation in sermons and adult education on Sunday mornings, LIFT and small group study.

**Timeframe:** The Pastors can be encouraged to consider how the question of allocation of resources can fit into their preaching immediately. Suggestions for small group should also be almost immediately available. The more formal education process will take up to 12 months to start depending on where we are in the adult ed. cycle and up to 15 months to begin a class or two.

**Cost:** Up to \$250 / yr. for resources for class leaders.

**2. Plan for Abundance. The way that we think and talk about our ministries can communicate scarcity or abundance.**

**A. Three Year Vision for Ministry.** Planning from year to year is like living paycheck to paycheck. Instead of living into a plan, we are doing the best we can to survive. We will survive; our focus needs to be on thriving in the Lord. A three year vision for ministry starts with an inventory of the ministries that we do today and then paints a picture of what those ministries will look like in three years (including the possibility that some of those ministries may have run their course) and what new ministries we feel called to add in that three year period. With that vision we can project what resources (personnel – paid staff or volunteers, infrastructure and budget) will be necessary to live into our three year vision.

**Timeframe:** Start Up: 1 – 2 months of committee input, 2 – 3 months of planning by LRP or a Session workgroup, 1-2 months for congregational input and Session approval.

Maintenance: Every year there would need to be some planning for the new third year.

**Cost:** Minimal

**B. Aspirational Budgeting.** Present the budget to the congregation (in a narrative format) before Commitment Sunday. The budget would talk about the ministries that will be undertaken in the coming year and the resources necessary to accomplish those ministries. Such a budget would provide the congregation with a goal. The budget would be adjusted based on pledges and other income.

Non-financial forecasts should be included in the narrative budget: # of guests to be served at PADS; # of meals to be packed at FMSC; # of men attending the Men's Retreat, approximate value of giving tree gifts donated by the congregation, etc.

**Timeframe:** Whatever time it takes to do the budget now plus 1 month to reformat it into a narrative.

**Cost:** Minimal

**C. Mission Giving:** There is a significant number of members of the congregation that feel that at least 10% of our budget should be used to support the ministries of missionaries and organizations that serve the “least of these.” An inability to dedicate 10% of our budget to those efforts leads to a feeling that our resources are insufficient. Consider committing to dedicating at least 10% of the budget to outside missions.

The specifics of how we can honor the 10% commitment will vary from time to time. One suggestion would be to include special mission giving (such as Souper Bowl Sunday and the Senior High Car Wash) and dollars raised by fundraising events as two line items on the revenue side of the budget.

Fundraising dollars were part of the budget the first few years of the Triple Treasure Auction (“TTA”). Fundraising revenue item was removed to take the pressure of raising a specific amount of money off of the TTA chairs. If the line item is restored, those in charge of fundraising should be assured that the budgeted amount is a goal rather than a requirement of what the fundraising effort needs to net.

Another suggestion would be to encourage committees to find ways to use restricted funds to augment their budget. Sometimes committees are reluctant to use restricted funds due to the fear that if their share of operating budget will not be restored if it is reduced for a period of time while restricted funds are being utilized. The three year aspirational budget

should be able to provide assurance to the committee that their share of the operating budget will be restored at some time in the future.

**Timeframe:** As early as the next budget cycle.

**Cost:** Minimal

**D. Staffing:** Personnel costs are a significant portion of our budget. Our personnel are also vital to accomplishing our mission (both in sustaining and nurturing our worshipping community and our outreach). The roles that we need paid staff to accomplish may change as our ministry evolves. There are three components to proper staffing: planning for type of person that we will need to have an effective ministry in each specific area of ministry; hiring / retaining the appropriate persons to accomplish that goal and eliminating positions that are no longer necessary to do so; and allocating the necessary resources to appropriately compensate our paid staff. Those three components fall within the work of the Long Range Planning, Personnel and Business Affairs Committees.

To continually achieve proper staffing will require those committees to work collaboratively. We should consider forming a standing working group made up of the chair of each of those committees (or their designee) and two members-at-large (drawn from current or past Session members) to meet periodically (quarterly?) to plan for future staffing needs and to assign specific tasks in regard to those needs back to Personnel and Business Affairs.

The Head of Staff would be a de facto member of the working group. As such the Head of Staff would act as a resource to the group and would be kept apprised of the groups discussions as appropriate. The Head of Staff would be welcome at all of the meetings but

would not be expected to attend the meetings of the group unless he or she was specifically invited to do so.

**Timeframe:** The first meeting could be within 2-3 months.

**Cost:** Minimal

**E. Deficit Budget:** Session should be encouraged not to publish a deficit budget. A deficit budget conveys the message that we do not have sufficient resources to accomplish the ministries to which God has called us. Instead of a deficit budget, we should go back to including a faith component in the budget, as necessary. That calculation of the faith component would have some basis in past results. For the sake of transparency the faith component should be highlighted on the spreadsheet and properly footnoted.

When the faith component is discussed with the congregation it should be presented as an opportunity for us all to demonstrate our faithfulness rather than as a crisis.

We cannot spend money we do not have. When there is a faith component in the budget, Business Affairs will need to be cognizant of the progress towards the fulfilment of that goal. If we are falling short, we will need to ask the congregation to step up. That communication should be carefully crafted both as to timing and content. In regard to timing, the Team suggests that, if possible, the first appeal be made around Labor Day. There should be a contingency plan for what happens if the budget gap is not closed by Thanksgiving. Advent is not a good time to be talking to the congregation about a budget shortfall.

**Timeframe:** The next budget cycle.

**Cost:** Minimal

Members of the Culture of Abundance Innovation Team:

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