

KNØX CHURCH

love faith outreach community justice



Wheat from Chaff reflections from our fifth a mission discernment programme

On 30 July we conducted our fifth mission discernment forum, “Wheat from Chaff”. We received a synthesis document (“Writing our next chapter”) summarising the discoveries we’d made about our faith, ethos, our goals for the world, our missional ethics, and our place within our neighbourhood and the wider city. We looked at a list we’d compiled on “things that God already is doing around us”. Reflecting on all this in groups, we began to articulate what, perhaps, the Spirit was saying to the church - what new thing we might be being called to do in faith.

This current document attempts to summarise that first articulation. On Sunday 17 September we’ll give time in worship to thinking more about the major themes that seem to have emerged. After the service we’ll have a post-it note board for people to post responses (for a week or so) - so that we can put further detail to some of our preferred mission possibilities and blow away some remaining chaff.

Feel free to take this document home and to discuss it with others. It might be useful, also, to reacquaint yourself with the first four pages of July’s “Writing our next chapter” document.

Affirmation of the usefulness of “positive difference”

The final line of our Mission Statement says that we are committed to making a positive difference in our world. We affirmed “positive difference” as a good focusing and measuring tool for our discernment. In all our plans, we want to be able to articulate what positive difference we are aiming to achieve.

Reflecting on our “news story” exercise

With complete freedom to choose any news story from the previous month, whether the story be a “good news, feel-good” story or a story of concern, people brought a selection of news stories to the attention of the group. When the chosen stories were plotted onto a grid of the five faces of mission, most fell into the categories of “responding to need in loving service” or “seeking to transform society”.

- We noted that “responding to need in loving service” tended to involve front-line, practical activity. Already Knox people serve meals at the City Mission. Already Knox supports the food-bank operating at St George’s / Iona. **What positive differences are achieved through this activity? What further goals (or associated activities) might come next?**
- We noted that “seeking to transform society” tended to involve education, political lobbying, community discussion. Already Knox collaborates with Ecu-Action in running social justice forums. The Alpine Presbytery has a Church and Society Committee, but we have no involvement in it. The National Church no longer has a Public Questions committee. Otago University has a Centre for Theology and Public Issues - and they are keen to establish internships around the county for exploring particular issues. **What might an expansion of “society transformative” activity at Knox look like?**

Reflecting on our ‘intentional seeing’ exercise

1. With complete freedom to choose any neighbourhood to explore, most participants chose an area within close proximity to the church building. This seemed to indicate an interest in our immediate neighbourhood (and perhaps a mission commitment to it). A major theme seemed to be re-engagement with the people immediately around us - taking our immediate neighbours more seriously, providing impetus and space for local community relationships to form and deepen - Knox as a network hub. Already Knox makes gifts of morning tea to some of its neighbours during “Neighbours’ Week”. **What positive difference does this make? What further differences are sought? What other things would enhance our neighbourhood**

connections? Do we need to do more intentional seeing and perhaps some intentional conversing?

2. During the intentional seeing exercise, a number of people noted the large number of high fences around properties in our neighbourhood - an architecture suggesting a high placing of value on privacy. What does this call us to consider? **Is the desire for privacy a problem, seeking the making of a positive difference (breaking down the walls)? Or is privacy something we should be helping our neighbours attain? What sorts of activities would serve each end?**
3. It was noted that our neighbourhood, at times, is really noisy. Although it was acknowledged that some people seek and noise and busyness, others seek refuge from noise. At this point much discussion occurred around providing our building as a sanctuary from the noise - a place of oasis and peace. To some extent the building could do most of the work in this matter. Some discussion was held about the nuts and bolts of rosters and door keeping. If a strong sense of calling emerges, then the nuts and bolts will need attention. **Is there a strong sense of wanting Knox to be an accessible place of peace? If Knox highly prizes peace, what else does it need to do? Offer yoga, meditation or mindfulness events? Provide public lectures on peace making and conflict resolution? Support Amnesty International or Greenpeace? Adopt the rule of the Iona Community? Organize a local peace prize award (a la Nobel Peace Prize)? Run a peace march to the Peace Bell? Sponsor a student to study Peace and Conflict studies at university?**
4. We noted that a large number of people in our neighbourhood are “passing through” - there are many motels. While we will never establish long standing relationships with our temporary neighbours, **what would constitute meaningful hospitable neighbourliness in this case?**
5. We identified a number of things which could be called “what God is already doing” in Knox’s immediate environs:

Caring for scared people in hospital
Hospitality, shelter, privacy
Is God in the sitting area outside the convenience store? In the science of the radiation centre? In the career help offered to military people? In the health at the gym? In the mental health treatment? In the rare low fences?
God is at work in PSSUSI.
God in the messy, noisy, gritty experience that feels full of energy and life. God in the surprises of things just popping up.
God in the gathering of people, even if it’s within a consumerist culture?

Do any of these God-activities feel like they are calling us to further exploration?

Reflecting on some potential strategic partners in mission

We noted that in the past we'd had some interaction with the following organizations or groups:

- Presbyterian Support
- PILLARS
- Christian World Service
- Durham Street Methodist Church
- St Luke's Anglican Church
- Fostering Kids
- Tangata Atumotu
- Canterbury Interfaith Society
- others already mentioned in this document

Do any of these stimulate any ideas? Are any of them doing work that resonates with any of the larger themes that seem to be emerging?

Reflecting on current political and conversational culture

We noted much political conversation at present suffers from shouting, rudeness, making things up. It was felt that within ascendant negative examples, there was a need to model and encourage a more positive way of engagement. There was a desire to provide respectful "conversational space" for healing interactions. **What might this involve?**

Concerning sermons

A person who could not attend the forum had raised the matter of optimal use of sermons at Knox. He considers the sermons preached here very good, and believes that wider circulation, follow-up, maybe wider conversations within a virtual community could be beneficial. He thinks it's a shame that sermons are preached once then filed. We do post them on our website. **What might come out of further sermon engagement? Does this raise any ideas for you?**

Concerning signage

We spent some time talking about whether we need rainbow signage as a sign of our commitment to inclusiveness. **Do we need rainbow signage? If we do, is there anything essential that needs to go with it? What positive difference would it aim at achieving?**