

## **Veritas Report: April 19**

### **What has been accomplished since we undertook the *Veritas* process?**

In August 2009 we instituted a Church Health and Growth Task Force to investigate the health of our congregation and assess avenues of growth. This was commissioned by chairperson Chad Bulet and the council as a proactive rather than reactive strategy, addressing the overall state of the church and encourage further health and growth. The Task force consisted of Jean Regan, Heidi Morrow, Jen Peckenpaugh, Don Wendell, Dave Holman, and Pastor Lars Stromberg (chair). With *Veritas* being a language, a lifestyle, and way of being rather than a workshop or program, we spent the fall months listening and collecting information from the congregation. In January we had our first *Veritas* town hall meeting with our moderator, Peter Sjoblom of the Central Conference, followed by a second meeting in March. The following findings came from those discussions, our strategic planning meeting from January's council meeting, and information collected and compiled from the Church Health and Growth Task Force.

### **What kind of church are we?**

Based on our assessment and the input of our congregation, we have determined that of the four church types in the *Veritas* model (Healthy Missional, Stable, Critical Moment, At Risk) we are a firmly 'stable church', with some of our congregation shading more toward Healthy Missional and others toward Critical Moment. We are thankful for our stability, but still striving to become a Healthy Missional church. As the *Veritas* material states, "Stability is the enemy of vitality". Attached is an information sheet that describes the characteristics of stable churches.

We have also gained a wealth of knowledge about our church in this process. The following are threads that showed themselves to be true throughout the *Veritas* process:

- We have an exceptional relationship as a church, both concomitantly and between staff and congregation.
- Those who were most excited about our church were those who verbalized personal spiritual growth.
- Those who were most concerned about the state of our church had a strong desire to see further outreach into our community.
- We functionally operate as three separate congregations demarcated by our worship service hours. This can be a positive, but is generally regarded as less than optimal.
- Our church facility, staff, and programs are welcoming, so long as we actually communicate hospitality to visitors and new attendees.
- Our primary areas of growth are in the areas of 10am worship, preschool, children, and youth.
- We have to actively combat societal realities of busyness, overcommitment, and less functional need for church.

### **What do we do now?**

The good news about our status as a stable church is that we are well resourced, programmed, staffed and equipped. The way to a more healthy and vital church from our stable state is not more programs, but rather envisioning creative ways to celebrate our strengths and address our weaknesses. We are encouraged that our congregation likes our church, feels strongly about our mission, and is pleased with their relationship to our staff. Our next step of action should be a balance of new ideas and retooling old ones. The church leadership ought not focus their energies on 'new' programs or initiatives, but rather reenergize the programs that already exist, buttressing a few key areas.

Our efforts of re-visioning and reenergizing should address the following questions:

- 1) Is the congregation encouraged to pursue God wholeheartedly?
- 2) Is the congregation worshipping and praying regularly?
- 3) Is the congregation connecting relationally in Christian fellowship?
- 4) Is the congregation serving God and others with their spiritual gifts?
- 5) Is the congregation empowered to reach their immediate community with the gospel of Christ?
- 6) Is the congregation participating in the worldwide spread of the gospel of Christ?

When all of these questions are adequately addressed in the affirmative, we believe that will be moving from stability to vitality.

From the common threads in the previous section, we move to action with the following truths in mind:

- 1) We must first address the spiritual fitness of our church. If we are not fostering the growth of personal and corporate faith, all other plans are for naught.
- 2) We must resist the urge to become myopic, looking ever beyond ourselves to new avenues of growth from beyond our membership.
- 3) We must work within our societal context to create times and spaces for prayer, growth, fellowship, fun, and service in the midst of busyness.
- 4) We must maximize our access to persons already using our facilities, such as sports teams or the preschool.
- 5) This movement must be one that the church leadership is genuinely excited about.

### **How do we answer these questions for our community?**

First, we continue our *Veritas* discussion in the life of our community. We have already seen the benefits of our town hall meetings with renewed excitement around our church and staff since we have begun this process. We have instituted the *Getting to Know You* dinners, our staff is publishing a new visitors document for the council monthly, new prayer groups have formed, and we have become more sensitive to hearing one another.

Second, it is clear from our discussions that there are three particular areas that needs to be addressed in a more formal manner for our given context. The three areas are 1) promotion of existing ministries, 2) more structured approach to our ministry to visitors, 3) increased emphasis on small group study and fellowship. These three areas, which we identified early in the process, have been verified throughout. We therefore suggest the following action points:

- 1). Institute a **Veritas Implementation Team** (VIT) to work with the council and staff to see the *Veritas* process through to action. It is recommended that this team consist of willing members of the Church Health and Growth Task force and members of ministry teams who would serve as liaisons between the council and the VIT. I would ask for the VIT members to commit to a year of service, from May 2010 to May 2011 in order to manage the tasks at hand, at which time the VIT would turn their responsibility over to the staff and church leadership. I would also like to ask the council's permission to continue as the chair of VIT.
- 2). Adopt the attached **Behavioral Covenant** as an official church document that should be agreed upon by the council and be available at all major church business meetings. This document will promote healthy discussion and support a united vision in church matters.
- 3). VIT chair will work the staff to find creative and effective ways to communicate the existing opportunities that our church offers. Thought will be given to Sunday morning announcements, the effectiveness of printed and internet media, and visual displays in our building. It is our firm belief that we are appropriately programmed, and by increased communication and promotion, we will reach more of

our community for Christ.

4.) VIT will work with the *Fellowship* committee to map out a more organized and resourced small group program for implementation in the fall of 2010.

5.) VIT will draw upon appropriate resources to assist in bringing organization and energy to our ministry to visitors. VIT will work with our administrative staff to implement this ministry as soon as possible.

6.) VIT will draw upon the resources of our *Worship* committee to create a program in which members of our congregation will have opportunity to share their role in our church community during Sunday morning worship. This will serve to support and affirm the volunteers of our church and encourage others towards the use of their gifts.

7.) The VIT will facilitate occasional focus groups to discuss various areas of church life. This will help to maintain the integrity of the *Veritas* process and serve as a checks-and-balance system for the VIT.

8.) The VIT chair will give reports to the council when prudent and will be accountable to the chair of the council.

**Motion:**

I motion that we accept the above report, in particular the preceding 8 action points as listed above and move forward with the formation of a *Veritas Implementation Team* with their commensurate duties.