

## **VISIONING CONVERSATIONS**

### **Listening for God in Scripture, 10.06.24**

#### **Summary of Insights and Big Ideas from Small Group Table Discussions**

The following is a compilation of insights and “big ideas” that were gathered from the small group table discussions around the topic of “Listening for God in Scripture.”

Scripture readings included in the study:

Isaiah 43:1-3a, Luke 8:40-48

Matthew 11:1-6, Matthew 4:18-22

- Do not fear, I have redeemed you
- Taking action holds me back
- The flames will not consume you
- Everything is bizarre
- We all have some anxiety in us
- How can we be welcoming?
- What is the work of the church?
- COVID affected us...what do we bring back?
- COVID already pared us down...maybe it is what do we bring back vs. not bring back?
- WELCA at least in its current state ~ maybe partnering with another church or with men's group
- Fill our minds with things that are good, with good vision comes good personnel (or requires it)
- When thinking about taking action or changes, with God there is no need to fear... God doesn't guarantee no flames, we won't be burned/consumed
- How to be welcoming on both sides of the door?
- We need to reach out to the community more (Pastor has brought this up in Visioning meeting)
- Maybe we need to pair up with other organizations (or churches) to do outreach  
Example: The Episcopal Jubilee House almost closed because of needing people to help
- CAN DO ISLAND on Garfield near South Airport, a day for those suffering with mental health needs
- Faith Reformed Community Garden — Bethlehem as a partner?
- Building up our own community...small groups and meals at people's homes
- Taking things in small bites
- How to reach out to community?
- We will serve the Lord when we spread light to others
- Enjoy weekly update, facebook page (weekly?)...Devotion? Bible Verse? Is it public? Promote FB page to outreach  
Sign at craft show to reach public?
- Harder these days to go into community/talk to people...used to go door to door to welcome people with youth group

- Community interviews — are we going out?
- People don't answer doors
- Feel elderly should let go of some things and allow younger to take the reins....  
WOULD THEY?
- The usual group, same people
- God's will
- Small groups were great — returning?
- The older some get, the less they can do
- WELCA strengthening for mothers, everybody works, running someplace, involved in activities, on computers
- People don't want to interact
- We all belong to God
- God heals and brings us together
- Relationships and connections
- Programs that should end..fundraiser \$ should be going to community service projects
- More direction services to community
- Serve each other — rides, helping with homes, visiting shut-ins/each other....more outreach thru friends of others
- Plan to go to help members/friends of members
- Aging population — how to serve them
- Matthew 25 — Immigrants are a political issue now...Jesus wants us to welcome strangers
- Call people out if they make derogatory statements
- We need to be more aware and act
- Use members' talents...share information in newsletter
- Offer activities/events at the church that offer a safe space — not shoving religion down their throats, example: chair yoga
- Use more social media...Overheard in web pages
- Community involvement...feeding the hungry, getting to know our community
- Knowing who we are, we are centered in the Scriptures
- Thankfulness, gratitude, joy, love, hope, salvation, peace, connected relationships
- We are called, we are His, we will not and are not being abandoned
- He will protect us, save us, redeem us, not to overwhelm
- Being called to fish for people, to leave "it" to follow Jesus. What is my "it" that I need to leave in order to more clearly follow Christ?
- Sole responsibility is the good news
- Jesus together with crowds/alone to be with God
- Isaiah, created formed — no fear, overwhelmed personally and with BLC
- Share good word — see and hear
- We are called, we must follow
- Communities outreach food - global outreach as well
- Luke, go in peace, helping others to feel welcome, finding peace in the church, not all feel it and do not find peace
- We should welcome all —What does that really look like?
- Ok to bring God up in your situations, no matter who or where

- Reaching out to others, compliments, greeting whether you know them or not — ok to bring God up
- Matthew — calling the disciples, leave it and follow me
- Jesus being aware of someone “touched me” — asking ourselves “who touched me”?
- Is it programs that may need to pause OR the manner in the way they are being rolled out, practiced, initiated?
- Start with one of our existing programs within our congregation
- Grow it within our congregation
- Look to other comparable causes and incorporate these
- Draw on other people or groups to expand the comparable things
- Drop programs that are already covered, use resources to expand and strengthen other programs
- Drop food pantry, expand child pantry to include food, clothing, essentials
- Involvement with Safe Harbor
- II Corinthians 8:21 and Proverbs 3:4
- Make it your purpose to do what is right, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of man
- Creation Care — environment
- Community Care — Baby Pantry, Safe Harbor
- Passages from Matthew, courage to do and tell...personally, asking what is my calling?
- Jesus wept...the power to cry, be comforted, and to comfort
- The power of love...to love ourselves and others....remember the strength of love
- Luke - Your faith has made you well. Praying for patience and care
- Isaiah - I have called you by name...God speaks to each of us personally and loves them for who they are...God has a vested interest in us, in how we live and love others

## **VISIONING CONVERSATIONS**

### **Listening for God in the Congregation, 10.20.24**

#### **Summary of Insights and Big Ideas from Small Group Table Discussions**

The following is a compilation of insights and “big ideas” that were gathered from the small group table discussions around the topic of “Listening for God in the Congregation.” The five focus questions are listed below followed by the respective input from the small groups. The final section lists the key takeaways from the individual group discussions.

#### **1. Can you describe how BLC has been important to you? When has BLC “been there” for you?**

- \* Men’s Group...working on projects
- \* Framed our life — The Center of our Spiritual Life
- \* Putting things into action — getting out and doing the work
- \* Welcoming to the family and members
- \* The chance to do service
- \* The Worship Ministry is a foundation
- \* Family — recurring theme, example: daughter in confirmation
- \* Has been time in the past when the pastor was disconnected, caused an exodus of the congregation
- \* Don’t follow the man behind the pulpit...follow Christ = FAMILY
- \* God has sent many pastors at exactly the time we needed them
- \* “Placeholders” in pews didn’t seem to participate as much
- \* Everyone is looking for a church home
- \* Comes down to community within congregation
- \* Here since 1971, raising kids, marriage, death of spouse, uncertainty
- \* Newly coming back, continuing Lutheran traditions, been here all the time
- \* Grew up in this church and got married at BLC and have helped with youth
- \* Children baptized here, especially important since spouse died
- \* People are key and remind me of all of the good times at BLC
- \* Sum it up in one word...Family
- \* Loved, deepening faith, Bible studies, Pastor’s message moves us, strengthens, seeing the Spirit in life
- \* Very friendly here...great community
- \* “Connectiveness”, prayer chain, small groups, developed bonds
- \* Safe Harbor
- \* Music is extremely important
- \* Overwhelming experience at first, then personal relationships developed here at BLC

- \* Deepening my faith, studies, sewing
- \* Throughout physical ailments, sorrow, spiritual and emotional strength — SPIRIT LIFT

## **2. Please share when you have found BLC lacking? Has there been a time when BLC has not “been there” for you?**

- \* When we went through the long period of time without a minister or leadership
- \* We lost a sense of family
- \* Have witnessed people leaving but not understood WHY?
- \* Group tends to find time of “lacking” rest on them, not the church
- \* Youth programs seemed to be taken over by school activities....caused discouragement when group became smaller...not church but secular environment
- \* We went through hard times and some wanted to leave
- \* Felt like the Lord was using me to help others
- \* Drifted away for a time
- \* Need more community outreach to kids and teens
- \* As a new member, no answer for this question
- \* Noticed a difference pre and post Covid
- \* How can we reach kids so engrossed in technology?
- \* The congregation is very closed and clique-ish
- \* Shaking the pastor’s hand and rolling
- \* Need more youth, bigger families
- \* Be open minded to new ideas
- \* Recruit younger members
- \* Pastor Paul does great job pushing envelope, props for sermon
- \* Children’s education, no reach out for teens
- \* Homeless, food pantry

## **3. What bold new or existing ministry would you get excited about at BLC?**

- \* Musical performances —get people into our church
- \* Baby Pantry — expand...provide food, clothing, and items a new mother would need
- \* A place for groups to meet — AA and Support Groups
- \* Doing things that would serve each other in our own church family...visits, repairs, maintenance, upkeep
- \* How can we serve the young families in this church?
- \* Find out why people have stopped attending services
- \* What do we need to do to resume attendance?
- \* What did we do to stop growing attendance?
- \* Expand Bible Study to include one for men
- \* Concern...if not able to commute to church, how will people get here?
- \* Helping to feed our community = scripture, food, rides, helping others
- \* Garden participation

- \* Gift inventory
- \* It's important for BLC to get into the community to draw people in
- \* Ministry to young people
- \* Food pantry especially for young people
- \* Catholic Church stopped their food pantry recently because of lack of participation
- \* Ministry to homeless and for community meals
- \* Christian caregiving that gives beyond flowers
- \* Teens? Clown ministry? Trauma ministry?
- \* LGBT community needs
- \* Having men's group doing odd jobs
- \* "Caregiving Board" at BLC — make this white board known
- \* Third Thursday open to the community
- \* Push small groups, encourage involvement
- \* Get back into new ideas
- \* Host meal for community
- \* Be a sideline cheerleader
- \* People commit to things but don't show up...they need an email reminder
- \* Lives change within our homes
- \* Stressful families are busy because of sports
- \* Caregiving could be larger extending into the community...expansion
- \* How to "hook" teens

#### **4. Please tell us what one thing defines BLC for you?**

- \* Worship
- \* Faith community
- \* Community
- \* Welcoming
- \* Sanctuary
- \* Family congregation to serve
- \* Joining BLC was hard, still warming up, like to be invited...it is important
- \* It would be good for the more experienced/involved to step aside to allow and invite others to take the reins
- \* BLC keeps me close to God
- \* Red Letter Challenge, Discovering sins unknown...focusing on grace
- \* Love and family
- \* Community, Friendly, Neighbors
- \* Pastor Paul's exuberance
- \* Location
- \* Craft Show
- \* Love and openness
- \* Family, Friendly, Transparency

## **5. To whom is God calling us to serve?**

- \* Our neighbor (without any preconditions)
- \* Everyone around us
- \* The people we encounter and meet
- \* People in and out of our church community
- \* Everyone
- \* Community
- \* Gardening with Faith Reformed
- \* College students
- \* AA
- \* Community as a whole
- \* Grief Support Group
- \* All are welcome
- \* Contra Dance
- \* Newcomers Club
- \* Outreach to teens
- \* Members who cannot drive at night
- \* Share care volunteers for those who need things done, raking leaves, putting up storm windows
- \* Habitat for Humanity
- \* Freedom Builders
- \* Do not duplicate
- \* Community, homeless
- \* Thank the community and LISTEN

### **“Key Takeaways” from the small groups discussions:**

- \* Not to duplicate services that are already provided elsewhere in the community
- \* The gift of being heard is accepting differences and working together...this creates understanding which leads to purpose and direction
- \* Serving others, use skill sets/white board
- \* Baby Pantry
- \* Dark time = searching for minister
- \* Community
- \* Support groups/identifying needs
- \* More transparency and awareness for what ministry is currently occurring within and beyond BLC
- \* Pre/post Covid different sense of welcome

- \* Youth game night
- \* Community neighbors — LGBTQ
- \* Baby Pantry/complete/caregiving
- \* Purpose and direction
- \* Gift of being heard is the gift of accepting differences in each other
- \* Silent and Listen utilize the same letters