

Annual Visioning Meeting

November 18, 2018

Attendees:

Joanna Marie, Kathy, Paul, Julie, Brenda, Fraelean, Joanna, Lisa, Charlene, Aaron, Bronwen, Sheri, Maria, John, Liz, Joy, Bruce, Phil, Phil's wife, Phil, Vina, Kim, Tom, Gini, Ose, Ray, Jenny, Meghan Grubb (phone), Deborah Soule (phone)

Joanna called the meeting to order. The call to the 2018 Visioning meeting and Coms meeting follow up on Sunday, November 18, 2018 at 144 North St. in Medford. Joanna reiterated the goals and agenda for the meeting (see handout), which will end in a vote. Next steps: we'll hold a part 2 visioning meeting in January.

Joanna introduced Sarah-Elizabeth, the facilitator.

Tom led everyone in prayer and read from Colossians (the hymn of Christ).

Sarah-Elizabeth opened the discussion by explaining that she's here to facilitate the conversation between everyone present. Sources of conflict are: hurt feelings, lack of communication, difficulties with making decisions, processes for decision making, and how to use resources in the community. Her role is to help share thinking, sharing, and needing in order to move forward. She wants everyone to be understood. She's talked to the Leadership Circle and folks from the LYS program in advance of this meeting.

Paul's role is to be timer and to keep a list of names. Joanna will take over when Paul leaves.

Sarah asked for any questions about the process. Kathy asked about how the voting process will work, and Sarah said Joanna will facilitate the vote at that time.

Sarah asked everyone to center themselves and led a short meditation.

Sarah asked everyone to write down an answer to this question based on the first agenda item: how you are about stepping into this process and noticing what the vision is for you.

Vision is to seek the best solution for the future of Sanctuary UCC, but I'm concerned about the conflict and the potential for more conflict after the vote is cast.

Fraelean introduced herself, and she became a member a little over a year ago. Sanctuary is an important part of her life because it's introduced her to a community in which she's engaged, both in church and the larger community. Today she feels committed to be honest about her experience and to recognize that she's anxious about the process; her vision for Sanctuary is that Sanctuary continues to exist and thrive and serve the members of Medford as we discern what that might be.

Sarah summed up what Fraelean said. Fraelean agreed.

Carvina (Vina) is anxious about today. She'd like for us all to have a clearer vision of our way forward. She asked, "What can be!?" She's hopeful and anxious.

Sarah summed up what Vina said. Vina agreed.

Kathy has been a member of the church for 34 years. She's been a deacon, on the church council, headed outreach for many years, raised her children in the church, participated in 3 search committees, chaired 1 committee, and her whole heart and soul is in this church. Sometimes she doesn't feel respected. She hopes today can be a turnaround and that we can all love each other. Kathy said that for a year we were in the crossroads process to clear our vision. As it says in the vision in our bulletin, we are action-oriented followers of Jesus, and she thinks we need to live into that and consider that.

Sarah summed up with Kathy said. Kathy agreed.

Debbie has been a member for 22 years. She brought her family up in the church. She served on many committees. She has a lot invested in the church and loves it. She is saddened and anxious about the process. She thinks there's been a breakdown in communication, but she's not pointing any fingers. She doesn't think it's the Christian way. We've lost our way in communicating with each other, and if we don't get it back, we'll all go our separate ways; that's sad to her.

Sarah summed up what Debbie said. Debbie agreed.

Kim was born into the church 60 years ago. She's taught Sunday School, been on committees, took care of the building and grounds, and she feels the same way that Debbie does. She doesn't want this church to end. She wants us to move forward.

Sarah summed up what Kim said. Kim agreed.

Joy has been a member for 20 years. It quickly became her second home, and she's been on many committees, councils, and spent as much time at church as she did at home. She feels anxious and concerned and apprehensive but also hopeful and trusting that God will show us a way forward. In many circumstances in tough decisions in the past, we've been able to move forward. She trusts that will be the case this time. Her vision is that there will be a bigger understanding of the vast history of the church. She wants to see Sanctuary grow in all of its ministries, and she hopes there will be healing, kindness, respect, and transparency and that communication will improve moving forward. Joy takes the action-oriented and justice parts of the mission statement seriously. Our church was called to connect with a specific group of people in this country, and she feels like the voice of God was speaking through our church for the marginalized.

Sarah summed up what Joy said. Joy agreed after clarification about the justice work expands beyond the church and local community to the nation.

Ose has been a member for many years. She's been part of the LYS group. She became a member just before the move and was eager about the experiment. She puts the LYS program on the top of her list. Her heart is very much for the program, and she was saddened about the LC's decision. We have the tools for a fresh start in terms of communication and relationships. We also have the tools for forgiving each other. Love can help this. Her vision is that this is possible. The transition from the old church to the new was handled beautifully and slowly with a good sense of community. She thinks we can use a similar process for the LYS decision.

Sarah summed up what Ose said. Ose agreed.

Sheri looks at this situation differently than many of the members. In her 6 months with this group, she's seen an unwillingness to work together in a covenant, which is a significant thing that's mission for a church. She's feeling frustrated by what she calls an unending chess game. She feels like the focus is on past hurts that weren't left behind during the move, and it strikes her as unfair fighting. She perceives that these things haven't healed or been dealt with emotionally that's fueling a lot of this.

Sarah summed up what Sheri said. Sheri agreed.

Gini is a member of the LC and was married in this church. She loves this church, and it's a part of her life. People here introduced her to a community. It's been drawing her in on a steady basis along with many others from the wider Medford community. She feels hopeful. It's about understanding our connectedness and dependence on each other for group survival. We have a year to prove sustainability, and it's not happening. We've used the last 9 months trying to figure out how to do things differently without it being personal. Anytime someone brings up change, it's scary to people. The difficulty with LYS was never about the program. We have two visionaries in this community that don't help each other in the best ways: one have a vision for Sanctuary and one has a vision for LYS. The visionaries themselves need a lot of support in order to help their visioning work.

Gini posed questions for the visionaries: what part of the job they do gets their heart singing and brings the greatest joy; what's the part of the job they hate? What they love is what we want to make happen for them. How do we make things more effective? Our group survival is dependent on our connectedness. If the church goes down, every group that deals with the church also goes down.

If LYS becomes a 501c then the program can sustain itself and the LC can look to the ministry that's Sanctuary UCC. We can't do everything.

Sarah summed up what Gini said. Gini agreed.

Sarah asked another question: how are you right now for honing a vision for Sanctuary UCC and the focus of our ministry?

Paul is hearing a common thread of concern of the survival of Sanctuary, what's it's doing now, and unstated is the belief that we have to grow to be able to survive to continue to do this. How do we grow in a short period of time to come close to financial sustainability doing the programs we think we should be doing? The world is very different than what he heard people envisioning 4 years ago. We've moved to a better place to making good decisions and knowing who our neighbor is and what they're looking for. We have many new members and new LC members. How do we minimize the friction and competition for resources and focus on the key things we need to survive? The role/vision of the LYS is different from the Pine Ridge program that existed before. Many things are changes that are beyond the control of the LC. Both learning experiences have been very important, and we're doing better now than we were 3, 4, and 10 years ago, but we still have a ways to go in understanding how the goals of Sanctuary and LYS can work together instead of against each other so both are successful whether together or apart.

Sarah summed up what Paul said. Paul agreed. Can these two visions move forward sustaining each other, or does another vision need to be created?

Lisa is a new member. She found Sanctuary through an internet search. Part of what drew her in was the LYS program. She's been oblivious of the conflict. She feels that she would be sad if they split from Sanctuary. She's not prepared. The LC hasn't spoken about this, and materials were just sent yesterday. She's not ready to vote, and it's all happened too fast. Having been a member and attended the services, it's a different church experience for her – it's a wonderful place; she loves the new form of worship.

Sarah summed up what Lisa said. Lisa agreed.

Phil has been a member since childhood. He's been inactive for a while since he moved away. He's participated in some of the LYS auctions over the years. He wants to make sure people can have great memories of this church, since he has so many great memories. He wishes the two groups could come to a resolution and move forward. Splitting off the different groups would be counteractive to the stated mission, especially as we're trying to promote growth.

Sarah summed up what Phil said. Phil agreed.

Anna Marie is not a member of Sanctuary, though she attends worship almost every week. She's a member of another church and is looking for something else now. She's impressed with the bravery of the congregation to setup a new model instead of merge with another church. The worship experience is most important to her, and Sanctuary has a unique way in helping people connect with God through

worship. Holding her back from becoming a member: knowing what it is to be attached to a church (building), and reluctance to committing to something that's an experiment and could be gone quickly. She admires what the church has attempted to undertake through the years in this leap of faith.

Sarah summed up what Anna Marie said. Anna Marie agreed.

John became a member a month ago. He knew about the sustainability struggle. He was on a faith journey a few years ago, and Sanctuary was close to his house. He checked it out, and immediately he felt at home. He doesn't know about the internal struggles or what needs to be raised to reach sustainability. He doesn't know where he'll go if the church is gone since it's a community to him. He's here today to listen.

Sarah summed up what John said. John agreed.

Joanna, moderator of the LC, became a member 2 years ago. She started this meeting shaking, but she's been so inspired about what she's heard since then. She grew up in a different church and spent more time there than home. She became ex-communicated and came to Sanctuary completely broken. She met Bruce and Joy on her first Sunday who then told her about LYS. She was drawn because of the church's mission statement. She found everything she didn't know she needed at church. The honesty and openness drew her in. She truly believes that all of the hard work is worth it, despite her fears of not reaching sustainability. We have compartments and bubbles as a result of the move, and these bubbles don't necessarily communicate.

Part of the reason she agreed to be moderator was because of a long conversation with Paul. He thought she had the history of being in a church, but she also didn't come with a heavy heart from this church, but another. He encouraged her to take every life experience she's ever had to push this church to live into a new way through its vision. This LC has met consistently twice a month. With all of this time and energy, and to not feel like we're moving forward is frustrating.

Bringing this to the congregation today is hard, but the only way to have this conversation. This is not a vote that has anything to do with the Lakota Youth but instead about how to structure our church so that we still have that wonderful feeling of support and love when you want something to happen. We want that same love and energy to be given to everybody who has ideas. She doesn't know how to do this when one thing has become so consuming. This is the only way she feels we can create space. We have so much talent. Her heart wants to have the space so everyone can have their dream grow like Joy's did. She wants other programs to have as much space as the LYS.

She's hopeful. 34 people showed up to this meeting.

Sarah summed up what Joanna said. Joanna agreed.

Jenny is hearing there is a breakdown in communication. She helped grow this church over many years and witnessed a lot of what happened before. Years ago, people weren't willing to come to the table to talk together, and it's encouraging right now to see and experience this coming together. She wants this community to grow. She loves the LYS program and her involvement over the years. We need to think of ways so that the burden isn't solely on Wendy. There's a need for new modes of communication between the partners and ministries in ways that are comfortable for the leaders of these bubbles.

Sarah summed up what Jenny said. Jenny agreed.

Aaron has been in the church for almost 6 years. He's had 7 church experiences throughout his life, and this has been the longest. Sanctuary had the most potential for being an open and confirming community. The programs are fantastic, including the LYS. For the last couple of months, he'd had anxiety and anguish due to his awareness of the possibility that he might have to leave his home soon if Sanctuary closes. Now being 18 and socially aware of what Sanctuary is doing for the community, he wants this all to happen the right way. He's trying to remain neutral. If LYS stays with Sanctuary, it needs to be redirected. He's protective of his mom, and it's hard for him to see his mom drained and upset. He wants the church to be stronger no matter what way we go, and he wants everyone to be a part of the conversation so that their wants are heard.

Sarah summed up what Aaron said. Aaron agreed.

Sarah asked if more time is needed to hear? Many people raised their hands. January 5th has been set as a second part of this conversation. She asked if everyone will agree to come back at this time to finish the conversation? She suggested starting at 10:00am and meeting for 2 hours with food.

Joanna said this means we'll table the vote. The 5th was decided due to Advent and Christmas. We can choose an earlier date if preferred. When we meet again, it will be a continuation of this meeting.

Sarah asked if everyone wants to come back to continue this conversation on the 5th. The work we've been doing is a pre-circle, similar to what she had with the LC and LYS. When we come back together, she proposes we continue the conversation in a different way. She will invite everyone to speak to each other directly instead of only her reflecting. It will take time, and her hope is that once everything is understood, everyone will be able to make a decision about what's best for one another. Her role is to help everyone better understand so that empathy is built.

Julie has been in the church for 35 years. In a smaller church, it's not as easy to know what's going on behind the scenes, and this conversation has been very helpful. She

asked for more information coming from the LC so that things aren't communicated out of the blue. Communication is vital.

Bruce has been a member for a long time. He's been active on many committees including with the decision to sell the church. In 2012 he first went to Pine Ridge with 20 other people. This was his first experience with taking the church out of the church. LYS was the first of the programs to take off. He doesn't think it's the intent of the LYS program was never meant to be at the exclusion of any other programs or work of Sanctuary. LYS has expanded beyond everyone in this room, and he considers it to be the "grandmother" of all of Sanctuary's programs.

Sarah summed up what Bruce said. Bruce agreed.

Charlene's first job was working for the UCC. After working for them for 5 years, she didn't want anything to do with church again due to divisions and conflict. This is very upsetting to her, and she doesn't know a lot about what happened behind the scenes. She loves all of the programs, and she doesn't understand why we can't all get along. The LYS shows us that we can raise money and become sustainable. She doesn't want to see anything to end.

Sarah summed up what Charlene said. Charlene agreed.

Nobody on the phone wants to speak.

John asked about the question of the vote. Joanna explained that the LC brought a recommendation to the church. As members of the congregation, we have to come to form that vote. The LC had a recommendation they felt needed to be brought forth to the congregation, but the members of the church will decide what that vote looks like. Wendy said the document sent by the LC had a motion. We need a motion to close this meeting now.

John motions to suspend the meeting until January 5th, 2019 at 10:00am. Jenny seconds.

Wendy said that what's at stake is our progress with the expected discernment/decision for a budget and ministry model that is typically voted on Feb. 3rd. She expects the LC to prepare some suggestions on how to manage that. We'll have to figure out a way to elongate our model based on our bylaws.

Joy has been very moved by everyone's thoughts and sharing. This is a good start to better communication, and she appreciates everyone coming together to share today.

Joanna asked all members to vote. All in favor unanimously.