

## 2024.05.30 (Special) Committee of the Whole (LC) All Hands Meeting

### With Don Remick, consultant regarding Hillside Partnership and Merger Conversation

- Minutes from previous meetings. [Ministry Meeting Minutes Archive](#)
- [Join Zoom Meeting](#); Meeting ID: 898 6959 2008; Passcode: 833386; By phone: 309.205.3325

**Meeting Purpose: With the consultant - reflect on our partnership, the merger process/dialogue, our experience & concerns, and hopes.**

**In attendance:** Don Remick (consultant), Wendy Miller Olapade, Aaron Olapade, Liz Douglass, Ray Santiago, Branwen Cook, Paul Roberts, Julie Roberts, Erin Sennott, Terri Bracy, Ben Jacques, Becky Jacques, Andrew Hill, Charlene Carle, Christy Miller, Jackie Kerstner (15 members)

1. **Recruit Meeting Clerk** - Aaron Olapade
2. **Opening Prayer Are You?** (a reflection on Psalm 23)  
*Your rod and your staff—they comfort me.* —Psalm 23:4b
3. **Present Highlights of Sanctuary’s Experience, Feedback, and Decisions @ LC May Meeting re: Joint Process with Don Remick re: the Hillside Partnership**
  - a. **Current Process Team:** Andrew Hill\*, Branwen Cook, Sue D’Arcy, Paul Roberts, Terri Bracy, Liz Douglass, Erin Sennott  
\*Andrew is discerning his continued connection due to personal transitions
  - b. **Feedback Bullets** (from [05/07/24 All Hands Meeting](#))
    - i. History Exercise - surprised by similarities, saw value in the review, did not feel like we got to know each other better - want more getting to know each other
    - ii. Imbalance - Sanctuary believes it is leaning in, fully transparent, creating openings; Sanctuary feels like Hillside is leaning away and setting boundaries, barriers, and non-negotiables
    - iii. Is there an appreciation for Sanctuary’s impact? It is not obvious to the participants that Hillside leadership acknowledges
      - The synergy and amplification that comes from the purpleness - ie: growth in numbers, energy of worship, creativity of things like pageant & palm sunday, impact of food mission, value of two pastoral and theological voices
      - That what Sanctuary brings will enrich or amplify the ministries of the future
      - The experience of Sanctuary;s unique ministries as they do not participate
    - iv. Partners in Purple - Sanctuary’s experience is that Hillside leadership expects Sanctuary to be fully absorbed and does not expect or desire purple. OTOH some Sanctuary members experience worship and fellowship as purple
    - v. Sanctuary stipulated to four non-negotiables set by Hillside:
      - Released members who brought conflict
      - Balanced Budget & Hillside Endowment Policy

- Hillside Brand and Worship Model w/Tom as managing partner therein
  - Co-pastorate w/ compensation equity
- vi. We began to identify some of Sanctuary's non-negotiables
- Circle Way, Arts, Justice, Civic Engagement that takes love and justice into the street (Living 'Out' Love)
  - A shared commitment to purple
  - Not a takeover
  - Blend Strengths and Amplify both
  - Our mission and pastor are protected
  - ??? tbd
- c. **Sanctuary Plans for 2024** (making an adjustment to being fully focused on merger based on where we find ourselves)
- i. Take the pressure off - we are not desperate - and do not want to be taken over; we want to get married because it is mutual, we want to amplify the progressive message, wonderful growth, and purple-ness that has already occurred
  - ii. Sanctuary will breathe into another year - edit what we do, reduce spending, and wonder about whether other directions are being called forth by God
  - iii. We (Wendy) projected deference to physical space and home court advantage with our behavior; ie: stipulated to non-negotiables without any conversation and spent our energy for the past 4 years investing in Hillside, leaving Sanctuary in the background.
  - iv. We will lean into what we do that is different! Get our JuJu back - Art, circles, collaboration, community. With or without them...
- d. **Practical steps (immediate):**
- i. Stay in process but give Hillside space to decide if they want what we are. The doors are open, and we want partnerships that affirm our gifts and graces and amplify what we know God is calling us to be
  - ii. Continue to look for alliances and partnerships to do ministry and mission virtually, in public spaces (ie: Arts Collaborative/Library/other churches) and with Hillside
  - iii. Consider releasing 458 High Street ASAP
  - iv. Find ways to reduce costs - staff time, spending, ministries - TBD
  - v. Invest in grant proposals to support Sanctuary's mission and ministry
  - vi. 2024.25 - Standalone Ministry Plan and Budget for 2024/25 as per above
  - vii. Immediate Timeline:
    - 6/3 - Visioning Meeting to develop mission and ministry plan that will define budget
    - Develop Budget for 6/11
    - 6/11 - All Hands to approve Mission and Ministry Plan & Budget
    - 6/12 - issue Call to Congregational Meeting
    - 6/23 - Annual Congregational Meeting

- 6/24 - 7/28 WMO Vacation

## Meeting Conversation

### Don's Thoughts:

- The image of purple is an interesting image, but I believe this is the end result. The purple has already started to take shape
- A blue organization with a red drops organization slowly changing the overall color of the two organizations into one body
- Looking for the two cultures that are present and how they deal with change/conflict
- Above/Below the green line; you've been living together as a church community, but have you done the needed community building to look forward
- When you encounter the feeling of 'armor' being put on by others, look at it as a tender spot/fear/change they are not quite ready for. Take a step back and recognize the fear being projected more than grow defensive
- Get to the language of we - when we see the reason, resistance - fear of losing something; armor; rejection - you have touched and anxiety or fear. I.e: the Color of Christmas lights; our time together will not resolve all of it, as it is a lifetime of movement; but we will get a lot of it dealt with

### Next Steps:

- Both groups needs to discern what are the core values that both communities find most important
- To imagine what is the perfect model for community after the merger
- Identify where the anxieties are at this point
- It may be helpful to gather the people who are new since the purple shift and have them name the whole scope of what they have learned/experienced, you may earn something incredibly valuable (ASAP)
- Create opportunities to allow the two groups to come together and deepen that connection
- Intentional planning for - Conversation, community building throughout the summer
- Build a description of the future church based on the treasured values of both church
- Then we can develop a plan for moving to the purple church

### Comments and Questions from the group:

- Erin Sennott: When meeting with Hillside, was that your request initially or did they request that? I felt defensive when I first heard this as it felt like they were upset/angry and needed to reflect/vent to only you (Don) and could not speak to us(Sanctuary) about it
- Aaron is wondering about how to build relationships - without it being about the merger - doing the below the green line work and person to person relationships, how do we get to loving each other
  - Don says to brainstorm that kind of thing, and plan how it can be both intentional and organic
- Terri Bracy: It feels like the only time we interact is Sunday morning worship, feels like the relationship is limited to physical space (144 North St); in the moments/opportunities that 'community' could be built have been missed by Hillside community.

- Don - (how do we build appreciation for the other's small group, ministry passion, etc. break down the silo - so that this one isn't Sanctuary's ministry and that one isn't Hillside's; but that everything is shared
- Rev. Wendy: Dreaded conversation about MicroPantry; there was an affirmation from a sanctuary member that the Micropantry is a great project that they are glad Sanctuary does; Hillside member quickly rebutted this fact to assert this was a Hillside-originated project. Yet, it is a powerful example of how the wonderful combination of the two amplifies the ministry.
- Branwen: Feel as though things are happening in regards to coalescing efforts, hope for more to come
- Ray: There is a Us and Them feeling, not sure how to address; We have Hillside and Sanctuary lanyards for name tags- Change the lanyards to purple!
- Paul: Had a fear of holding on to historical ties from Hillside; but they are all new. It feels as though they are of the opinion that if the merger were to not happen, they would not suffer/lose a very crucial part of their current identity
- Terry Bracy: Many of the new members don't know what church was like before the 'purple' and as such do not experience the issues the way the pre-purple members do
- Charlene: Reflecting on the fact that my community has remained with Sanctuary members (like at coffee hour), even with the purple coalescing these last few years
- Jackie: I am one of the new people and I can't imagine church without the Sanctuary part and Wendy.
- Christy: Strange to me (new to church context) even in circle time, Sunday morning - there is a minister and their flock, uni directional leadership and spirituality coming from Tom and Wendy - wonders about the influence pastors have with congregations; often when I hear about attitudes and what happens and who gets to say what - ie: there is no purple option in the initial non-negotiables required to even approach the merger conversation. It feels like there is no transparency to pastors' influence.
  - Despite the nice nice behavior - sometimes rejection or hesitancy is not about fear - sometimes it is because there is no attraction. How authentic is the investment?
  - Is this an authentic desire to come together and what extent is the pastor driving things?
  - Don: My gut tells me that some form of purple is in the heart of both; and both churches do authentically want to build a future church.
  - Don: Each brings strong, unique gifts; and neither is holding on to unique/divergent cultures. You have a potential for synergy of escalation!!
  - Don: Let's all hold onto the experience and keep testing these assumptions.
- Liz - Listening, agreeing and wants to know what the next steps are.
- Erin - resonates with Christy and Terri's courageous input.
- Ben - Arts! Film! Open mic nite, we got to know each other through their interests and gifts. We open up in another dimension by talking about life and faith. Arts Survey to seek interests.
- Andrew - not sure if I have anything to add. Glad we will get to clarity about plans going forward.
- Paul - There are times when I wonder if Hillside is as strong as they think they are; long term. Wondering about costs and finances; and the music program change.
- Don - I appreciate that you are Creative, hopeful, and optimistic.