

Little Home Church by the Wayside

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RE-VISIONING:
A church focused on community & mission

Leadership Team Recommendation

*Respectfully offered by the New Beginnings Leadership Team:
Kathy Haben; Bob Kaska; Kathleen Sullivan Kaska; Peg Schramuk; Jim Winqvist and Susi Winqvist
September 2015*

The New Beginnings gatherings: A Summary

Purpose: Explore what the group believes is **realistic** for the congregation—ways for our church to **adapt** to a new beginning.

Participants for one or all of the sessions:

* Denotes session leader

Kathi Abell
Greg Abell
Nancy Alex
Sandy Antonelli
Carol Berger
George Bergland
Anne Bouchard
Judy Britt
Larry Dieffenbach
Janet Figge
Dianna Griffen
Anne Haben
Kathy Haben*
Jen Haseltine
Lori Haseltine
Sandi Harper
Judy Hopkins
Karen Kaluska
Bob Kaska*
Kathleen Sullivan Kaska*
Alex Kentfield
Christa Kentfield
Susannah Lesswing
Jean Muno
Frank Muno
Maureen O'Donnell
Dave Poole
Marilyn Poole
Lori Prang
Bob Schless
Mary Jean Schless
Peg Schramuk*
Jane Shelton
Tim Shelton
Kristen Thornton
Jim Winquist*
Susi Winquist*
Art Zwemke

The New Beginnings gatherings engaged 38 Little Home Church (LHC) members in a meaningful conversation about the future of our congregation. This number represents more than 75% of our church's average worship attendance, and exceeds the New Beginnings goal of 50%. The gatherings were organized into three groups: two groups met independently for a series of three sessions, each two hours long; a third group met on one day for six hours. Each group was led by two members of the New Beginnings Leadership Team, who facilitated discussion and recorded input. The goal of these discussions was to determine a new focus for LHC, a new sense of purpose, to help choose the future for LHC, instead of letting the future be chosen for us. The data will enable us to make a bold, new decision, to face reality and gain confidence for local, relevant missional service.

Condition of LHC—Conversation about the present realities of our congregation, and thoughts about our strengths and challenges:

- What can our congregation be best at...what is our context for ministry?
- What level of passion do we have for this ministry?
- What resources do we have to facilitate this ministry?
- Are we a 'membership church' or a 'discipleship church'?
- Are we 'contextually relevant,' how do we link to our community?
- Do we move with passion and energy into the mission we claim?

Recorded Input:

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Passion | Interested in each other, and taking care of each other (e.g., care boxes for our college students and service members; memorial service luncheons; etc)
Music program
Traditions/heritage
Survival/continuance, flourishing
Mission work and service
Social events, fellowship
Spiritual journey
Rummage sales |
| Best at | Music
Traditions/heritage
Known for Blessing of the Hounds, Pageant, Women's Advent Tea
Small size, intimate, unique character
Generosity, can-do spirit ('little church that does'), participation
Open mindedness, concern for justice, friendly and welcoming spirit
Rummage sales
Social events, fellowship, communications
Working hard
Outreach |
| Resources | Affluent community
No debt, but ongoing budget deficits; reliant on proceeds from recent sale of church real estate
Educated, smart, professional, skilled people; willing to try new things
Attractive facility, manageable scale |



Mission Redefinition

is a spiritual, systemic and strategic visioning process taken on by a congregation that is striving to realize what God has called it to be and do in brand new ways.

*This re-visioning has to do with changing the soul and passion of the congregation so that it is **singularly focused on a particular direction into the community** to be and share the good news of Jesus Christ.*

The Missional Church

The shift from making good church members to making disciples of Christ.

The shift from church growth to community transformation.

The shift from preserving the institution to expanding the church by training and sending local missionaries into the community.

Examining Our Community

What are the ministry needs?...the demographic profiles and lifestyle groups? Discussed the concepts of discipleship and the missional church. How do we go beyond the ‘attractational model of church life’ to a ‘missional’ model of church?

The Missional Continuum

Participants selected one of the boxes on the continuum from left to right that best described our church as related to each of the five categories of ‘aspects of congregational life.’ The consensus of each group, noted as X, Y and Z, was obviously parallel in response.

Based on the New Beginnings program LHC’s place on this continuum points to the strategy option: Redefine the Mission, as having the most promise to be faithful to the needs of the community and to effectively employ our resources.

The Missional Continuum

Aspects of Congregational Life	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Participation		XYZ			
Leadership		XYZ			
Church Budget			XYZ		
Relationship to Community			XYZ		
Use of Building			XYZ		

Participation—#2. Church participants care for one another and are friendly to new people who visit the church. The church adds at least a few new people each year. The church intentionally plans one or two activities each year geared for people outside the church.

Leadership—#2. Some leadership tasks (in worship, meetings and programs) are shared between the laity and pastor. The pastor is viewed as the one primarily responsible for following up with visitors and making calls to homebound persons. The church has job descriptions for leadership roles, both lay and clergy.

Church Budget—#3. The church gives away at least 10% in outreach. Likewise, 5-10% is spent to launch new ministries or programs. Any money received from building use is dedicated for expenses related to upkeep of the facility (and not used for church staff, programs, etc.)

Relationship to Community—#3. People from the surrounding community frequently visit worship, dinners and/or other events sponsored by the church. These visitors are familiar faces to the people in the church, but most visitors do not become active in the church.

Use of Building—#3. The church facility is used by many community groups. The church frequently chooses to waive the rental fee for groups with purposes similar to that of the church’s (for example, free rent is provided to another congregation, AA groups, etc.).

Re-visioning: What does it mean?

If one were to ask what Little Home Church is known for, what would come to mind? Do we have a clearly identified missional focus? Think of Resurrection Church. Do you immediately think of the Food Pantry? It could be said that feeding the poor and hungry is a mission focus for that Church. What are we known for, in terms of a mission?

Our vision and mission statements are printed in the worship bulletin each week.

Our Vision: Celebrating and Sharing God's Love in Christ.

*Our Mission: Glorifying and praising God.
Being servants of Christ.
Participating in and expressing the Spirit in and among us.
Teaching and learning the Word of God and the Gospel of Christ.
Creating a nurturing community.*

What do our Vision and Mission statements convey about LHC? What meaning do these statements have for you? Do they have a spiritual impact on your life?

By definition, our **mission** statement explains our purpose; it describes what we do, for whom, and how we do it. A **vision** statement orients everything we do and drives us to the future. It identifies goals, provides direction, and motivates people/actions forward.

So what does it mean to re-vision?

Re-visioning can be defined as the process of changing, altering, improving, making additions to, or creating a new version of something. That something could be a plan, the law, a school paper, our by-laws, or a way of thinking. Re-vision denotes action. Re-visioning is a spiritual, systemic, and strategic process taken on by the members of a congregation in an effort to discern what God is calling them to do and be. Long-term re-visioning has to do with changing the soul and passion of the congregation so that there is a clear and focused direction for mission—mission within their community. For LHC, it begins with reflection on our core values and purpose of our mission. Re-visioning at LHC means a change in how we do church, thinking differently to do things differently in an ever changing world, determining what outreach mission will best serve our community, and committing ourselves to action for that purpose.

One might feel that re-visioning is like walking naked into the land of uncertainty (Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within, by Robert E. Quinn). We will be entering uncharted waters, feeling vulnerable in the face of the unknown. Some practices and programs will remain familiar. Others will be new. Change will not happen overnight. As we journey together down a path of outreach and ministry within our community we will evolve into our re-defined selves as we adapt to a new way of thinking, doing, and being. There will be hard choices to make and work to be done. ***Much will be asked of us as a congregation and as individuals. But through the diligent efforts of this family of faith led by the Spirit, much can and will be accomplished.***



*Doing more with
a defined focus.*

*What we do should
be hands-on, and visible
in and relevant to the
community.*

*A change of mindset from
'looking in' to 'focusing out'
and engaging people.*

Focus on community & mission: Next steps

1. Council shall appoint a Re-visioning Leadership Team to guide the process through the next phase.

Our by-laws were amended to include a Long Range Plan Steering Committee (LRPSC). As the name indicates, this group is responsible for long term planning for LHC; developing and updating the plan every two years or more frequently if necessary; guiding the initiatives, decisions and resource allocation of the ministries. The Long Range Plan is to include mission, vision, objectives and strategies.

And as stated in the by-laws the committee consists of the past Moderator, two Members-at-Large, a representative from the Outreach Ministry, and one additional member selected from the current ministry participants by the Moderator. Up to four additional members will be selected from the congregation at large by the Nominating Committee.

The LHC Council has determined that the **Re-visioning Leadership Team (RLT)** and the **Long Range Plan Steering Committee** should be one and the same.

2. Identify the need(s) in our community.

Defining our community was an ongoing point for review throughout our New Beginnings discussions. In order to identify community need(s) we must first define what our community means to us at LHC. The New Beginnings Assessment defined our community as the area within a seven-minute drive from our location. Given that we are a commuter congregation, we may determine that the community we choose to serve includes areas beyond that radius.

Once the community has been defined, the RLT/LRPSC will collect data from discussions with area churches, Township and Social Service Agencies, the Village of Wayne, and various age groups, with specific attention to millennials. Additionally, the team will utilize our in-house resource for information, the Outreach Ministry. The goal is to identify the need(s) in our community which in turn will suggest missional opportunities and direction. The RLT/LRPSC will recommend a definitive mission focus based on the identified community need(s), e.g., hunger, homelessness, veterans, seniors, etc.

The RLT/LRPSC will evaluate the data collected in the research process outlined above. The initial mission recommendation will be presented to the Council in draft form. Any amendments, additions or subtractions can be made at that level. Council will then determine how the recommendation will be presented to and adopted by the congregation. Once our mission focus has been determined, a plan for implementation can then be developed to include short-term and long-term objectives. As stated above, the committee charged with the task of moving the plan forward will be the Long Range Plan Steering Committee (LRPSC)—aka the Re-visioning Leadership Team (RLT).

3. Fiscal responsibility. Appoint a task force to develop a sound financial plan for the next 3-5 years and beyond.

During the course of the New Beginnings gatherings, our financial concerns were a topic for extensive discussion by congregation members. Though we are debt free in terms of a mortgage on our property, we have operated with a budget deficit for the past few years. Our overall income from pledges and various other contributions has not kept pace with our financial needs. At the current rate of spending our reserves will be exhausted within the next few years. While we know that our ministries are excellent stewards of our resources and accomplish much with little, at the current rate of spending our reserves will be exhausted within the next few years. The development of a sound financial plan is tantamount as we move forward with re-visioning our future. The task force charged with developing the financial plan may include representation from the Stewardship Ministry, the Endowment Fund committee, and the congregation at large.

The Assessment: Summary

Adapted from the New Beginnings Assessment document for Little Home Church by the Wayside, compiled by Doug Pfeiffer, Assessor, November 14, 2014, Illinois Conference

On-site visit *Oct. 30, 2015*

- Tour of facilities and property
- Meeting with financial officers of church
- ‘Windshield tour’ of community to confirm demographic data
- ‘Appreciative Inquiry’ session in the evening with 25 participants from the congregation
- Additional data collected: demographic data for participants in the church and their approx. tenure in the congregation; church’s income/expense reports for past 3 yrs. and current balance sheet

Current context & condition

- Pastor Centered Church (51-150 people) tends to hand more responsibility for care of the congregation to the pastor. The pastor’s presence at meetings & activities is very important. Most decisions involve pastor one way or another.
- Decline in congregation (in past 10 yrs.) in contrast to community growing by 17% in last 14 yrs.
- General Fund income has increased very slightly from 2004 to 2013, from \$277,051 to \$278,507
- Total Outreach has declined from \$30,701 in 2004 to \$21,410 in 2013
- New People: # of ‘Confirmations & Confessions’ and ‘Transfers’ has declined from 2004 to 2013

Who we are

- 58.3% of congregation is Boomer generation or higher, compared to 33% of wider community is in this category (vital congregations normally experience 50/50 split between Boomer & younger groups)
- LHC is 100% Anglo compared to the 85% Anglo of surrounding community
- Participant tenure: 70% more than 5 yrs., 30% less than 5 yrs. (healthy congregations at 50/50 split)
- Most of the participants at LHC live outside a 7-minute radius of the church

How we participate

- * *Ideally 30% each where starred*
- 21%—*Spiritual Development (direct spiritual or discipleship growth, excluding worship)
- 58%—*Relational Development (deepening relationships/social events)
- 9%—*Missional Service (expression of service to the wider community)
- 12%—Decision Making (committee meetings & administrative groups that plan)
- LHC is weak on missional activities (direct hands-on) and somewhat weak on spiritual activity.
- We forget to engage in the very things that make church life different from any other group in the community

The community

- Immediate surroundings: small town, has a few homes in the \$130K to \$275K range
- Rich history of horse business and agriculture
- Home values: many homes, especially west of church, are affluent \$630K to \$1.9 million
- Boundaries of study area: South, Hwy 64; West, Fox River; North, Hwy 29 Stearns Rd.; East, Hwy 59
- Possible rich evangelism fields: developments near Forest Preserve; communities south & west of the river

Key subcultures in community

See full Assessment Document for the ‘Mosaic’ profiles of lifestyle groupings of people who share behaviors, social characteristics, attitudes and values. A ‘mosaic tree’ demonstrates the interconnectedness of these distinct groups. (See Page 18)

Online presence

- Church has an attractive website with up-to-date information and a scrolling series of photos on the homepage; is user friendly with links to two social media services (Facebook on which the church actively posts its events & announcements, and Youtube); suggest additional contact information on each page.
- Not noted in Assessment: LHC has monthly on-line newsletter and regular weekly email blast communication about events, notices & reminders

Facilities

- Based on average worship attendance/building square footage, the congregation is only using 40% of space
- The ‘sacred walk’, what is seen approaching the church: paint peeling; shutters in need of repair; cracks in some sidewalks; shrubbery & garden area in middle of building is well maintained except seasonal leaves that have gathered
- Parking is limited on site (5 spaces on gravel). Limited lighting that reaches street parking. No handicap-identified parking places. Maximum capacity based on available parking is only 34 attendees.
- Entrance to sanctuary is not well marked because there is no sign indicating ramp as handicapped entrance
- Sanctuary: Clean and shows no signs of wear or water damage; based on accepted measurements, if a



sanctuary is less than 40% of capacity it will impact worship attendance as participants feel it is uncomfortably empty—at a max. capacity of 160, and our average worship attendance at 55, the current sanctuary usage is less than 40%

- **Gathering areas:** Parish Hall is clean & neat in appearance; Kitchen is small but spotless and up-to-date; Guild House classrooms & meeting places are in need of paint/repair and children's teaching materials areas appear cluttered
- **Offices** are clean, neat & up-to-date; storage areas are well hidden & have a 'stuffed' look due to limited space
- **Restrooms:** Two in sanctuary area & two in Guild House are clean but not all are handicapped accessible
- **Systems:** HVAC is 15 yrs old & inspected regularly; fire extinguishers are up-to-date; there is an alarm system
- **Deferred maintenance:** Outside paint/repair on buildings; paint/repair inside Guild House; cracked sidewalk; handicapped accessible signs and updates in restrooms
- **Building use:** 54% usage by LHC groups; 46% use by non-church groups; healthy balance of community & congregational use of the facility, however there is a preponderance of administrative use when compared to worship, fellowship and other uses

Financial review

- **Offering Support:** The LHC congregational offering support for the church expenses well exceeds the recommended minimum of 70% of total income received.
- **Operating Expenses** of the LHC by percent (**Actual/Recommended**):
 - Salary Support — **54.26%** / 50%
 - Building & Admin. — **32.11%** / 25%
 - Program Expenses — **5.68%** / 15%
 - Mission Giving — **7.95%** / 10%
- **Financial capacity:** Congregation is operating in recent years with a yearly deficit which demonstrates weak financial capacity; Income streams are not adequate for meeting the expense of basic ministry with the current property (rule for measuring congregational support of finances: \$1,000 X the Average Worship Attendance); based on LHC's AWA the congregation far exceeds this rule

Summary

- LHC has slightly declined in participation
- Giving has not kept up with CPI (cost?)
- Serious generational gap as well as racial gap with the broader community
- Most LHC participants live outside the 7-minute radius
- Longer-term participants outnumber shorter-term participants over 2 to 1
- Weak on proportionately offering missional and spiritual activities
- Church mainly uses its building, in terms of internal ministry, for administrative purposes
- Building complex is in relatively good shape with little deferred maintenance needed, but parking for newcomers will need to be addressed
- Currently the church has inadequate financial resources to fund its present ministry into the future; it has a generous base of givers but the church will need to address these serious stewardship concerns soon
- Congregations have four basic choices for the future:

- 1] **Do nothing**—which is still a decision and will send an important message to people in the church
- 2] **Mission Redefinition**—this option requires significant energy, ingenuity, creativity and spirituality because people will be leaving behind previous ministry entirely and doing a very new focus in ministry
- 3] **Redevelopment**—can take numerous forms and hybrids, including relocation, reaching out through a parallel start to a new demographic profile, a restart, an adoption or combinations of these with Mission Redefinition
- 4] **Close**—realizing there is not the energy or resources to keep going; a way of concluding the congregation's life with dignity and intentionality so that their assets can continue to work after they are gone, in providing a faithful, lasting Christian witness



Much will be asked of us

as a congregation

and as individuals.

But through the diligent efforts

of this family of faith

led by the Spirit,

much can and will

be accomplished.

