

The Pastors Connection

How Big Shall We Grow?

A growing church is a wonderful gift! It also presents challenges and opportunities. The past months your Pastoral Team has been discerning what God would have us do with the growth with which He is beginning to favor us. We believe it is wise to discern this matter long before growth necessitates conclusions.

As outlined below we believe church planting would be God's preferred future option for CMC versus the option of unlimited growth in one place. We recognize not all growth is equally conducive to church planting; however, our best wisdom as a Team is to commit to intentional discernment towards a church plant when Sunday morning attendance averages 225 over a three month period. We are now ready to receive your counsel on this matter.

The following foundational beliefs shape our current thinking:

1. We believe growth is a characteristic of Christ's kingdom evidenced in all creation
2. We believe healthy organisms grow naturally
3. We believe God sometimes restrains growth until containers are in place
4. Although growth can be measured in multiple ways we believe kingdom growth includes numerical growth where potential exists (may not exist for a congregation in an isolated dying town for example)
5. We believe that although God blesses some churches to minister to thousands in attendance; God calls other congregations to steward their growth by planting churches so they retain strengths only possible in a smaller body

Research indicates that when attendance goes over two hundred it gains a unique "feel". Few can know everyone. By necessity the Pastor mostly spends time with leaders. The sense of being a family diminishes.

We also recognize church planting would require sacrifices. Few of us like change. To accomplish church planting entails genuine sacrifice and loss alongside the joys and rewards.

We also believe church planting has benefits over unlimited numerical growth. The benefits include:

1. Fits the church planting history of previous CMC generations
2. Preserves our strength of CMC members remaining connected to one another
3. Lets us continue to live into the Anabaptist NT emphasis on community
4. Preserves our strength of every member having a place to use their gifts
5. Motivates us to actually call out and equip the next generation of CMC leaders
6. Casts a forward and outward looking vision to "benefit others"
7. Reflects the current cultural emphasize on genuine community

Many families are drawn to programs only possible with larger numbers. We envision preserving this benefit with “network ministries” similar to what CMC did with daughter congregations in past decades. We foresee network ministries including youth ministry, affording more dynamic interactions; leadership training, enabling use of higher quality equippers; and our Food Pantry, Sewing Circle, and V.B.S.; plus our anticipated Hope Within Medical Clinic.

You have called your Pastoral Team to lead in matters of vision. Wise leadership also invites the prayerful feedback of members. We welcome you to add your voice!!

Joyfully Living Christ’s Story with You, Pastor Bob Petersheim