

## **Summary of 2022 WDC Delegate Table Conversation Notes**

### Notes in response to State of the Conference Report:

- 10 table groups
- 2 virtual groups
- At least 50 respondents

Many comments focused on pastoral transition: Delegates noted the high percentage of WDC congregations in pastoral transition and suggested possible reasons: Pastors' retirement, political polarization, the challenge of "doing church" in the midst of diverse cultural realities, congregational resistance to change, and COVID's impact on worship, decline in attendance, stress in pastoral ministry and transition processes. Delegates shared experiences of pastoral ministry and transition in their congregation or family. The pandemic has left some pastors and congregations struggling, while others are renewing energy and moving forward. There was gratitude for interim/transitional ministers, effective transitional ministry and tools such as nonviolent communication and peaceful practices, and also recognition that not all congregation members welcome the challenges of transitional work and difficult conversations. It was noted that some congregations are hiring interim ministry staff who are not (or not yet) credentialed. Delegates highlighted the importance of developing pastors and engaging youth/young adults, with ideas for how to do this: Emphasize a "culture of call," AMBS Explore program, internships, Spanish leadership training and resources, financial assistance, educational debt assistance, congregations partnering together for youth programs, involve youth in ministry/leadership roles and activism; address current issues relevant to youth, nurture discipleship, openness to change.

There was also discussion about connections and relationships: It is important to strengthen communication and partnerships in WDC. There is affirmation for a listening tour of WDC congregations, and encouragement for an action plan to follow. Would commissions consider meeting outside central Kansas, and visiting congregations? What barriers prevent congregations from participating in annual assembly, especially when virtual attendance is available? Is there follow-up conversation about this? Change is challenging. It is sad to release a congregation, and also good to see new churches join WDC. Appreciation for all that WDC is doing.

### Notes in response to Ministerial Leadership Commission Report

- 10 table groups
- 1 virtual group
- 50 respondents

Even though there was a range of responses to the MLC report (particularly regarding credentialing LGBTQ pastors and retiring the WDC procedure for pastors officiating at same-sex marriages), the overall responses leaned toward positive and celebratory with some concerns about process and the impact on congregations with more restrictive views. Among the two Spanish-speaking tables there was outright disagreement and concern regarding decisions to

include credentialing and marriage of LGBTQ folks. The main rationale for this position is that the Bible is clear on this matter.

Salient Comments:

- Affirmation for giving discernment to congregations.
- Concern about congregations withdrawing from WDC.
- Question about the MLC retiring their procedures related to the Rainbow Resolution, when the resolution was approved by the WDC delegates.
- Appreciation for conference leadership being of one mind.
- It is helpful to hear stories regarding these matters.
- Appreciation for the hard work of the MLC.

#### Notes in Response to Facilities Assessment Team Questions

- 10 Table Groups
- 3 Virtual Groups
- Several Additional/Anonymous Notes
- At least 65 respondents

Participants were asked to dream about potential missional uses of the 2500 Place space. The results reflected the creativity of the group assembled, and although they were asked to "not consider cost," for some the temptation was irresistible. It seems there was energy and vision for considering something new for 2500 Place, while at the same time the Library ministry was affirmed, more than once, as essential. A good number of ideas and questions were documented to aid the ongoing work of the Facilities Assessment Team.

General Categories of Ideas:

- Food Services Business (e.g. coffee shop, ice cream, bakery, craft brewery).
- Space to Promote Creativity (e.g. "Maker's space", sewing, ceramics, painting ...)
- Contacting Institutional Partners, local NGOs/Non-Profits, or support groups.
- Thrift store / 10 Thousand Villages
- Drop In Community Space (e.g. computer cafe, "rent-a-desk", after school homework space/mentoring, language classes)
- Childcare Center
- New Church Plant Location
- Sell the building and find other space.
- Lodging for immigrants/guests
- Space for a seminary/ministerial leadership training program

#### Notes in response to Resource Commission report

- 10 table groups
- 3 virtual groups
- 52 people
  
- Communication and Accessibility
  - Could there be more online resources? Online resources would make things much more accessible for churches at a distance.

- What are other churches doing that works well and how is that information shared with others?
- Youth
  - Combining area youth groups allows larger groups for programs and catechism
- Additional resources noted and requested
  - Ongoing translation—Spanish
  - Discipleship
  - Training of leadership
  - Preparation for teachers
  - Young people getting involved with ministry
- There were several topics noted for further consideration and discussion
  - Battered women
  - Young people with depression
  - Abused youth
  - Single men and single women

There was appreciation for what the Resource Commission provides but the recognition that the door is open for more to be done.

#### Notes in response to Church Planting Commission Report

- 11 tables
- 4 virtual groups
- At least 62 participants

The most discussed topic was to identify the necessary components to support a successful church plant with the caveat that even then the outcome was unsure.

- Patience
- Resilience
- Trust
- Prayer
- Empowerment
- Finances
- Leading people to Christ
- Discipleship
- Communication
- Embracing the community

A second theme was the relationship between existing churches and new projects. Sometimes this was discussed in connection with the above necessary components.

- Existing churches need to be revitalized, boosted, re-planted
- Legacy/declining churches devote much energy just sustaining themselves
- But we have the gift of space within our buildings and communities which we could share with others in creative life giving ways.

A number of tables mentioned the need for new models.

- The language of church planting seems dated.
- Are we spreading ourselves too thin with many projects of 10-15 people each?
- Groups could organize around issues (activism)
- Or sacred passageways (nature - outdoorsy)
- Or special interest groups - mutual support
- Will attending church by livestream live on after Covid?
- For those not returning to in-person worship should we provide some other type of church experience in our communities
- Example: Ministry of Social Action addressing injustice in the community involving 30 churches
- Example: Nonviolent witness in violent neighborhoods

There was affirmation for the Church Planting Commission Strategic Plan and in particular its last Focus Area: Make connections with communities and individuals who would feel at home in Anabaptism (Anapabt-ish)