

3rd Roundtable on City Transformation - TrueCity Hamilton

Friday, 23 April 2010, 9 AM to 12:30 PM, Tenth Avenue Church

Presenters: Dave Witt, International Teams, Team Leader for TrueCity
Andrew Zantingh, Senior Pastor, First Christian Reformed Church of Hamilton

Dave and Andrew took about 90 minutes to present an overview of TrueCity's history, mandate, activities, and structure using powerpoint slides and videos. We have copies of these as well as a 4-page colour brochure and an MP3 recording of the morning. Below are notes from the Q&A period that made up the balance of our morning together.

Challenge: the high cost housing keeps parishioners from living in the neighbourhood of their churches in Vancouver.

Some TC churches are destination churches and others are more local.

How does this affect pastor's time management?

- Opens all kinds of new opportunities, but does require change of priority (10-15 hrs/week) and new capacity (covering new staff and programs thru foundation grants, etc).
- Effectively having two congregations in one: an old guard, and others who have new vision or are new to the congregation
- Churches with most capacity have to step up to assist birth/growth of the movement, understanding this is part of their own ministry to city.

Need for ANCHORS

- Takes at least 3 congregations to start
- Senior pastor as gatekeeper has to buy-in and strongly release a delegate, then ensure the whole church goes deeper into the partnership and the neighbourhood

How critical is covenant to the success of TC?

- Similar importance to that of the covenant a spouse makes to stick with their partner regardless of ebb and flow of energy and stress
- Must be cultivated and accountable if it is to remain living and life-giving
- An amazing witness of unity

CRC – “ministry shares” (financial contributions) to head office – how to balance this with local ministry?

- Fulfill covenant with denomination; First CRC has been increasing its ministry share so it can eventually reach 100% of its obligation, while maintaining its contributions to TC
- \$3,000 annually to TC out of \$350k budget
- Lots of “pro bono” time
- Leverage denominations to fund TC

How do other groups view TC?

- There are levels of partnership – not all will covenant
- Some interfaith involvement exists, but this area needs growth
- TC has not sought to be high profile so far, but are held in high regard by the press and City Hall
- Unitarian church is very engaged when it comes to environmental issues: one of our shared projects is a community garden.
- Goal is to thicken the social fabric

What is the moderating/facilitating process to keep everyone focused on the common cause?

- Dialogue yields insight that the ‘other’ is not as different as we thought.
- Centre set versus bounded set mentality
- The Gospel, if true, moves us into mission and following Christ; generates a trend across denominational lines that is a Holy Spirit movement.
- Leadership Team is designed to keep TC focused on missional goals
- Appreciative Inquiry

Change management for parishioners:

- Leaders take time to shift paradigm through preaching (3 years)
- Invite everyone; those who come will catch on: seeding and cultivating
- Experience a broader group and concrete examples – different voices calling to same thing
- Peer support for leaders (especially pastors)

How is the local government impacted?

- Different aspects of government, including school boards, become aware of effects in the neighborhood
- They use TC as an example to encourage others
- Small actions are changing the church’s reputation

However, there is still a need for:

- More advocacy against government plans in the neighborhood, and
- City hall needs a face of the church to talk to in order to implement a delivery system

How to connect nonprofits with congregations?

- Churches are hard to work with for NPOs and TC can manage that contact
- Churches can be territorial – NPOs have expertise to share and thus can speed services to new parts of the city
- NPOs can be arrogant in the face of congregations: we are the experts, stop meddling

We hear talk of “mission” a lot – where does “justice” fit in? How can we avoid being co-opted by Empire? Cooperation is good, but Jesus was killed because he upset the apple cart – what is the prophetic/political role of TC?

- Bill C11 on refugee claimant process
- 2015 Pan Am Games coming to Hamilton/Toronto
- Spectrum of perspective within TC churches – hear challenges from each other
- Micah 6:8 is core to TC’s concept of mission. TC is still earning the right to be heard, gaining credibility
- Still getting to know the populations affected and thus what justice looks like
- We’re moving beyond services to relationships, and thus leaving charity model behind
- Hospitality has been most volatile issue to preach on
- We can’t shortcut the time and process required to build trust

How to get focus teams and sustain the ebb/flow:

- Keep ear to the ground for what the Holy Spirit is consistently raising
- Know that this does require leadership capacity – someone has to be remain and be tasked with it
- Keep in mind that focus groups don’t die, they hibernate
- Individuals must represent a church to participate, and we check with their church to confirm
- Social networking tools could allow us to expand beyond this model and allow things to develop organically

TC Capacity:

- \$170,000 budget (mostly salary)
- 3 full-time employees, 1 part-time (International Teams missionaries). Somewhat unique to IT’s goals, needs to be more shared in future
- Shared supervision between IT and TC [Coordination] team

Next Steps for us in Metro Vancouver

- Recruit, equip, and link community organizers in neighborhoods
- Facilitate gathering of refugee organizations to discuss a united front/effort
- Set parameters for our gathering
 - Boundaries
 - Ground rules
 - Top 5 needs of the city which we could address collaboratively
 - *Listen* to each other and to those in need (including people and organizations)
- Just be in the same room together and see what happens
- How do isolated individuals and staff of small organizations get plugged in?
- Humility is a core value that opens the door for Kingdom work
- Phases: draw people in and then respond to felt needs
- Dialogue on values, purpose, and mission could build trust in and of itself
- Tell our own story and dreams, and let commonalities emerge
- Keep priming the conversation with presentations by examples like TrueCity