

## **May 31 Congregational Collaboration: What We Heard**

On May 31, the Congregation gathered for a collaboration session focused on the first three Guiding Statements: *Connect to God, Connect to Community, Do Justice*. After reviewing each Guiding Statement, Tables considered what the church is presently doing that needs to continue to be a focus of our efforts and shared opportunities for growth, impact, and deeper engagement.

Below is a summary of key themes from the collective conversation. “GS” is short for Guiding Statement.

### **1. Sunday morning remains the centre of our shared life.**

One of the clearest findings across almost every table:

- Theological depth of sermons
- Music
- Harmony of sermon and music
- Sunday worship
- Online worship
- Child formation
- Godly Play
- Scripture readers from diverse backgrounds

Nobody is suggesting Sunday morning is less important than before. In fact, several comments suggest the opposite:

Focus on Sunday morning services.

Sunday mornings are our landmark.

Continue to focus on this (Sunday worship).

### **2. The Congregation is seeking *deeper connection***

Again and again, there are variations on:

- Informal conversation opportunities
- Coffee & Conversation
- Potlucks and lunches
- Intergenerational and generational gatherings
- Kitchen events and food preparation
- Lunch & Learn
- Book clubs / essay clubs / podcast clubs

- Retreats
- Funeral planning groups
- "Play together"
- Follow-up when people drift away
- Helping people know who is new, ill, or in long-term care
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Across the tables, the desire is for spaces where people actually know one another. This is consistent with GS 2 language about connecting to community.

### **3. Formation opportunities are a significant area for growth, impact, and deeper engagement.**

The congregation repeatedly asks for:

- Reading groups
- Retreats
- Book clubs
- Essay clubs
- Podcast clubs
- Learning opportunities
- Faith formation beyond Sunday
- Learning why we do what we do in worship
- Discussion of contemporary issues
- Education around justice issues
- Education around church history

The Congregation desires more opportunities for intellectual and spiritual formation within community. These opportunities build on GS 1 (Connect to God), GS 2 (Connect to Community), and GS 3 (Do Justice) and are consistent with the Congregation's desire for deeper connection (point 2 above)

#### **4. The online congregation is an important part of FBCH and needs more attention.**

Multiple tables mention:

- Online worship
- Better sound quality
- Online funerals
- Online meeting space
- Promoting podcasts
- Growing podcasts
- Hubs of outreach to online participants
- "Online deacon"
- Wider provincial and national reach

The Congregation recognizes we have a growing community of people connecting online and notices the need to deepen our engagement with those online. Through online connections, we help people to connect to God, GS 1, and have opportunity to better connect to community (GS 2)

#### **5. University connections need to be nurtured, both as an effort to strengthen community with students and as an opportunity to do justice.**

University students appear everywhere.

Not only:

- Student lunches
- International students
- Food security

But also:

University as opportunity

"A whole city across the street"

Development of the university crowd

The congregation understands the university district, our neighbourhood, as part of our vocation and identity. This connects with GS 1 (Connect to God) and GS 2 (Connect to Community), as we seek to be a faith home for students and a community of welcome. Comments also connect to GS 3 (Do Justice) in concern about food security among students and support for international students.

**6. Discovering ways to better communicate and connect people to opportunities are significant areas of growth, impact and deeper engagement. This shows up in a variety of ways:**

**6.A. Doing Justice is valued, but there is opportunity for wider participation**

Very few people argued for entirely new justice priorities. Instead they said things like:

- Communicate what we're doing
- Help people know how to volunteer
- Invite people
- Draw more people into existing opportunities
- Match skills and interests
- Create a culture of calling
- Make personal invitations

The Congregation seems broadly satisfied with *what* FBCH is doing. The challenge is *who is involved*.

**6.B. The Congregation sees FBCH as a connector**

Comments include:

- Cathedral-like role
- Wider provincial reach
- National reach
- Global Baptist networks
- Canadian Council of Churches
- Supporting inclusive churches elsewhere
- International partnerships
- World Day of Prayer
- Australian church connections

The congregation does not imagine us shrinking inward. Many imagine FBCH acting as a hub, bridge, convener, or catalyst as we extend our local work for justice into national and international conversations.

Communicating and Connecting cuts across all our Guiding Statements and supports findings already named above.

## **7. Reconciliation and Indigenous relationships are emerging as a distinct theme**

This appears in several places:

- Mi'kmaq partnerships
- Beading event
- Reconciliation
- Indigenous artwork
- Commissioning a Mi'kmaq artist
- Learning from Australian churches regarding reconciliation

This represents an opportunity for growth in our commitment to GS 3 (Do Justice), as we seek to be better neighbours and form deeper relationships.

## **8. Food keeps appearing everywhere**

The Congregation evidently loves eating! Food shows up under:

- Worship (serving different breads in communion)
- Community
- University ministry
- Justice
- Intergenerational connection
- Refugee work
- Harvest outreach
- Lunches
- Potlucks
- Food security
- Cooking together
- Cultural sharing

Food functions as a practical expression of GS 1-3.