

Progress Report from the AMC Visioning Team – Phase III

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Introduction

The Visioning process has been evolving in stages over the last 1 ½ years. Phase I focused on assessing who AMC has been over the past 10+ years, especially before the pandemic. This information was obtained by reviewing historic documents such as the results of prior church surveys, the AMC covenant, the conclusions of the Transition Team of 2016, and prior pastor-search documents.

Phase II focused on an assessment of who AMC is now. The Team reviewed the compositional change which has occurred within AMC over the past 10 years plus the initial ideas for AMC's future which were expressed at the retreat of 2023. In addition, a church-wide questionnaire was distributed, with results summarized for the congregation in July of 2024.

Phase III, the subject of this report, deals with who and what we envision for ourselves as a church family as we grow into the future. In order to solicit this information, a half day of discussion of the topic was held at the church retreat in September of 2024. This was followed by five additional Zoom sessions with smaller groups. All of these sessions were moderated by Barry Bartel. About 50 people participated in one or more of these discussions. Barry's full report in addition to the comments of those participating in the Zoom sessions are available to you online.

Phase IV will follow this one as we ascertain, fund, and implement the changes needed to grow into our vision.

A Prioritization of Our Diverse Visions for AMC's Future

Given the varied make-up of AMC, it is not unexpected to see in Phase III that a very wide range of comments were elicited about people's hopes for the future. While many wonderful and creative suggestions were made, this summary report reviews the ideas which were given the highest priority by those who took part in this process. The major areas of interest in our hopes for AMC include:

1. **Deepen spiritual formation and practices so as to better deal with a stressful world.**
These efforts should include ways of enhancing our worship with more Taize services, increased music and hymn sings, and incorporation of more prayer practices. This could supplement our current practices which include First Hour, Care Groups, retreats, and the lectionary discussion group among others.
2. **As an Anabaptist church, we need to increase our peace witness.** Among other things, this process could include a more visible participation in community-wide peace projects

and undertaking de-escalation training to aid our church family and possibly the broader community.

3. Commit to fewer ministries but address these ministries in a way that is in-depth and intentional. In this age where we find ourselves pulled in many different directions and ministries, there is a limit to the amount of time and energy that we can specifically devote to our church activities. Instead of having a large number of ministries, we should tighten our focus - this also should serve to help reduce leadership fatigue. We will start by taking an inventory of our members' participation in ministries outside of the church in order to help us hone AMC's own priorities.
4. Work toward a vision in which we learn about the health of our planet and contribute to remedies for climate change. We can expand upon our current practices (such as recycling, composting, use of solar energy, restriction of single-use plastics and so on), as well as offer more sacred interactions with nature such as Wild Church.
5. In the spirit of Anabaptism, we should share our resources and capabilities communally. Initial steps are being taken in this direction by preparing a resource inventory.
6. Enhance the diversity of our congregation. This includes supporting younger families, persons in marginalized groups, and those who need improved handicapped accessibility. This will serve our own congregational needs as well as those of the community around us. In particular, as the participation of younger families with children grows, we must prioritize volunteer participation in order to expand our programs for children and youth.
7. Restructure the current church governance and working groups. Our current Leaf structure results in an inequity of workloads and does not seem to be meeting our current needs as well as it used to. In particular, we must address the unwieldy number of duties shouldered by the Stewardship Leaf in such a way as to manage budgeting and capital and estate planning in a more efficient and equitable manner.
8. Relook at our church building needs and renovation plans in conjunction with the development of a realistic capital plan. We own a building that is essential to allowing us to reach our full potential and to serve each other and the community in which we find ourselves. The building requires some maintenance and remodeling to better serve current and future ministry needs. In church building discussions on Zoom, the majority of participants requested either a refresher on the details of the previous plan of 2020 (for which funding for implementation was not approved), or to update that prior plan so as to better serve our visions for the future. The mortgage will be paid off in two years, and we can anticipate receiving a reasonable amount of the increased capital for this project.