

Report on Isaiah's Table 2015 Discernment Process

General Information

- 9 hour-long sessions were held after worship, followed by lunch, on Saturdays January 10-March 7
- Attendance ranged from 24 people to 15 people. Everyone who attended worship was invited to become involved in the process, with the understanding that they needed to make a commitment to attend the entire series of meetings. There was a nice mix of those who originally founded Isaiah's Table and those leaders who came on board the last several years. Our first meeting of 24 was an actual even split- 12 founding leaders and 12 new leaders.
- We based this process on the resource "Starting New Worshiping Communities: A Process of Discernment" put out by the 1001 New Worshiping Communities Movement. Many of the steps were used by the founding leaders in our 6-month process of discernment which led to Isaiah's Table formation.
- Each meeting began with prayer and Bible Study. We created a set of ground rules for the process that we read together each week. The first 6 weeks of the process involved defining key words to create a core values statement for our process.
- The process was co-facilitated by Liz Buonocore and Nancy Wind

Why Isaiah's Table embarked on this process

- intentionality- setting aside time as a community to listen for the Holy Spirit's leading
- protection from complacency- things are going really well – we don't want to miss opportunities for growth
- opportunity to "take our temperature"- a time to revisit the original vision for Isaiah's Table and see how it relates to newer community members
- development of future leaders from the broader community based on common understanding of core values
- development of possible new initiatives with broader community

Core Values Statements from the process

Jesus is God's love in human form; a radical teacher of unconditional love and forgiveness; he willingly died for us and was resurrected to heal our broken world.

Church is a group of people seeking to understand Christ's teachings through worship and witness.

Witness is sharing my faith in God in a compassionate and personal way that is reflective of how I live my life.

A **disciple** of Christ is an active follower of Christ and His teachings who spreads God's love to others through words and actions.

The **gospel**, or good news, is that God is like Jesus and Jesus is within us.

We brainstormed the following list of people we especially want to reach through Isaiah's Table

- immediate neighborhood
- young adults
- people who know of God but don't affiliate with a congregation (dechurched)
- the unchurched or the unbelievers
- children
- people already here

From the process, the following projects/new initiatives were identified as well as leaders who would facilitate these projects:

Start-up/ New Initiatives (these are ongoing/periodic/seasonal)

- Glove/Clothing giveaway
- Minor home repairs in neighborhood
- Young adult ministry

- T-shirt recycled/reusable bags program
- Raised bed gardens for neighbors (at their residences)

One time event

- Isaiah's Table logo t-shirts/ tie dye

Other (continuation in new ways of things we already are doing)

- New publicity
- Matthew 25 Farmwork
- Health ministry (mainly through food pantry)

Progress in the three weeks following the discernment process

The Health Ministry team has met and has a working plan to obtain health care/personal care products to be distributed to our community on Saturday mornings and to our neighborhood through the food pantry. This group is also pursuing other opportunities for health education and screenings for those in need.

The Young Adult team held its inaugural gathering with 7 young adults from the Syracuse area in attendance. They plan to meet bi-weekly over a dinner meal to worship and study together. They also plan to have periodic fellowship gatherings. Once they become more established they will do more publicity to get the word out to the Presbytery.

The garden initiative team has met several times and has gone out to various community gatherings to network and help gain resources for this plan. The publicity team is collecting ideas and will meet again to help promote the work of the other teams and new initiatives.

A leadership team meeting will be held after worship on Saturday, April 11th to present the progress of these new initiatives to the entire faith community.

Some reflections on the process from Nancy Wind, coordinator

- The greatest gift of the process, for me as a leader, was the beautiful energy of the Holy Spirit at work during the first six weeks of the process when we studied and prayed and discussed (with some argument) about the definitions for those five fairly simple words- Jesus, church, witness, disciple and gospel. One day we spent the entire hour discussing "who is Jesus" with a group of 22 people. It was the best day, in my opinion.
- I will admit that I assumed only 3 or 4 new projects would end up "having legs" when all was said and done. I was amazed that our group of leaders embraced **ALL** of the final list of nine projects that bubbled up from our brainstorming list of over 40 ideas. I am thrilled about the follow-through that has already taken place! God is certainly continuing to do a new thing at Isaiah's Table.
- Out of this group of new leaders who attended the majority of discernment meetings, the founding leaders have identified three new leaders who we have invited to attend the leadership retreat we have scheduled at Vanderkamp April 25-26.