

Congregational Renewal Response Group
Board of General Ministries
November 14 & 15, 2013

Thursday, November 14, 2013

Participants: John Duckworth, Elisai Echevarria, Kay Farley, Bill Frederickson, Rick Hansen, Don Ng, Nancy O'Neill, Dean Parker, Koreen Villers, James Wolfe, Jeff Woods & Marilyn Tyson

Judy Fackenthal, ABC vice-president elect, and Ken Marsenburg, ABC Director of Development, joined the group as guests. Rick Hansen, new director from ABC of Maine, was welcomed to the group.

Jeff Woods, staff to the group, spoke about the Mission Summit conversations which were part of the Mission Summit/Biennial in June and the Mission Table, which met in Green Lake just prior to the BGM meetings. He reported that there were 1,000 participants in the Mission Summit Conversations on 32 topics. The evaluation report was very positive and there have been 2000 unique visits to the website. He shared a document, "Momentum Document Post Mission Table" which he prepared following the Table. The document listed a number of tasks which Jeff plans to complete in order to help keep the momentum going.

The Mission Table began with prearranged groups and then rearranged into self-selected groups. Out of the discussion the top ten (10) topics were identified. These ten were:

Discipleship (Koreen)	Next Generation of Leaders (Eli)
Pastoral Attrition (Bill)	Evangelism & Mission Outreach (John)
Congregational Transformation thru Missional Outreach (Nancy)	
Violence—Reclaiming the Prophetic Voice (James W.)	
Alternative Models for Pastoral Leadership (Jeff)	
Living Out our Cultural Reality (Dean)	Women in Ministry (Kay)
Church Planting (Rick)	

The members of the group chose one topic to focus on; the names are listed following the topic.

There was discussion about what factors led to the huge participation in the conversations at the Summit. Ideas suggested include: the opportunity to talk, everyone had a voice, and people had a sense of identity.

The question was asked: what is envisioned as the end of all of this. Jeff suggested that even some regions as well as some congregations may use this same process. Hopefully some speakers will be integrated. Don suggested that the challenge is to live into the new way of being ABC.

Jeff also reported that the speaker/trainer at the next National Leadership Council meeting in April will be Chris Joyner presenting on The Leadership Triangle.

There was some discussion regarding the placement of women in positions of leadership. John reported that Patti, his wife who is an Area Minister in ABC of the Northwest, is very interested in placing women in pastoral positions but that it is a challenge to find those who are interested in taking a position in the Northwest. Don noted that it has been suggested that a national honor roll of regions who are taking the lead in placing women be created.

Kay closed this session with prayer.

Friday, November 15, 2013

Members of the Congregational Renewal Response Group shared about some of their Thanksgiving & Christmas Traditions. These included: gathering with 6-8 other congregations in the area with an offering to benefit the community; names are received from the Salvation Army and each child named receives a gift and their family receives a basket of food; Thanksgiving “food in a box” – along with food and love, everyone in the family receives a new pair of shoes; a Thanksgiving luncheon for residents of the area where many area immigrants are unfamiliar with Thanksgiving – the turkey is stuffed with rice;

Directors then shared how their churches and regions are involved in congregational renewal. Eli reported that his church is focusing on community within the church with small groups and accountability within the cell group. Young adults and families are connecting with older people. Koreen reported that her church has been involved in 40 days of discipleship. James spoke about his church’s “Unbinding the Gospel” – four series of 6 weeks each related to devotion, prayer journals, and prayer partners. The church has found it’s a great joy to pray for one another. John remembered a time when the church had been planning an event on stress; they learned that a military base nearby was having a similar event so the church cancelled their event. When the congregation learned that the hotel where the event had been scheduled would not release the church from the contract they invited senior citizens to come for a luncheon. The luncheon was so popular it became a monthly event.

Don noted that there is a great craving in the United States for belonging. He wondered how the churches of group members help people to belong. Nancy shared about her small church, located near a university and where the average age is 65 has begun to serve a meal on Thursday evenings to college students. Meanwhile they are praying for guidance about what their next step should be. They are also allowing their large building to be used by many groups: Alcoholics Anonymous, a Quaker group, and Assembly of God group, etc. On “Black Friday” they plan to have a program where mothers can bring their kids for babysitting. Jeff spoke a church in Cincinnati which had few attendees but where thousands of people walked past the church. The church set a goal of shaking hands and greeting as many people as possible.

There was discussion about the shift that happens with many of these programs; conflicted values may be a factor and a shift needs to happen to get at the conflicts. It was noted that with an initiative like Transformed by the Spirit (TbyS) the change must be much deeper than just changing the pastor and that this change doesn’t happen immediately; it often takes a long time.

Don thanked John for his service in this response group. John is completing his board service with this meeting and will also be retiring as pastor of his church. He will be serving as an Interim pastor following his retirement.

John closed with group with prayer.