

## Notes from Listening Session at St. Paul's Bellevue – Tom Kagy facilitating January 30, 2018

13 persons attended (majority of clergy), including Tom, Joyce Oyler, Rev. Diane Carter (local pastor), and me.

Names and email addresses were collected.

No live streaming today.

What connection have you had with the wider church?

- Association officer (multiple people)
- Various association committees (multiple people)
- Various conference committees (multiple people)
- Conference board member (multiple people)
- Three Great Loves campaign member
- Board member at United Church Homes (multiple people)
- Lantern Fellowship
- General Synod delegate (multiple people)
- Coordinator of National Youth Event
- Crossroads board member
- UCC Board for World Ministries
- Outdoor Ministries – participant and leadership
- Young clergy group

Tom shared his perspective about the Vision Team process. We're committed to building trust and listening to all voices. "Change is one of the hardest human endeavors." Described the three working groups. We are still in the imagining phase. A few possibilities have emerged but no decisions have been made. We are regularly asking "What can we do better together than separately?"

What do you want to say to the Vision Team:

- The form and structure don't matter if it doesn't improve and strengthen the relationships with the local churches. Many in the local church have no knowledge of the wider church. When they do hear from the wider church, it is generally asking for financial support rather than providing support. Outreach is more often to the larger churches rather than to the smaller churches.
- The wider church is helpful when it gathers people from various churches who are passionate about certain issues. Often, there may only be one or two persons in any local church with a particular passion. An example offered is the upcoming trip to Washington, D.C. The wider church may also help churches connect with one another around issues.
- One Great Hour of Sharing, Christmas Fund, Disaster Relief, Crossroads, and Back Bay Mission are areas where local churches see value by the denomination meeting needs.

- Will there be a **“first responder team”** for crises in the local church? Examples are a death of a pastor or conflict between different factions. Communication with local churches to ensure that they are aware of what is available to support them. Joyce described the Covenantal Elders team in CSE that strives to build relationships with local churches. Cathy commented on the work of the Best Practices working group and the intent to spread best practices throughout the footprint.
- We need to be aware of the current culture and its pressures. It’s difficult to find people to serve on existing committees whether they are local or wider church simply because life is so busy.
- We should talk with other conferences about what they do. Perception is that Ohio Conference is heavier in staff than others. We need to streamline, and not just change names of various committees and other bodies.
- For many people, Outdoor Ministry is the only way they have connected with the wider church. It is very important that these activities continue to be supported – summer camp, Lantern Fellowship, youth events, etc.
- Participation in outdoor ministry activities is often a challenge for small churches because there are so few children and there aren’t people going to camp that they know.
- We need to communicate in the way that younger people are interested in. This is not only the communication vehicle, but also the type of communication.
- We aren’t sufficiently tolerant of failure. There are times that we don’t try again when something doesn’t work well the first time.
- An observation of duplication and redundancy between multiple associations – this is from a licensed minister that began in CSE and is now serving in NW. Sees an opportunity for more collaboration.
- An observation that there is more enthusiasm and commitment to change than in the past.

Feedback on the Vision of becoming “one, nimble responsive judicatory that is faithful in mission and responsible stewardship.”

- A question was asked about what the thinking was behind the word “nimble.” Vision Team members present weren’t able to be definitive because they were relatively new to the Team, but responded that it suggests adaptability, and also an ongoing attention to changes in the environment that would indicate additional changes.

What different name for the judicatory?

- No suggestions were offered although one participant said she had emailed in a suggestion.

[ocuccvision@gmail.com](mailto:ocuccvision@gmail.com) – use for any additional thoughts or suggestions