

Strategic Priority 3: Service through Compassionate Action

June 25th, 2017

Session Notes

Attending

Cedar Thomke , Leslie Gillett, Valerie Howe , John Tiffany, Marion Pape, John Worton, Martha McDougall, Bruce Sterling, Barry Wiebe, Karen Furnes, Lillie Lentz, Stephen Lentz, Leigh Waters , Don Vipond, Clare Vipond, Adeline Morris, Pam Harte, Susan Layng, Mary Ellen Nichol, Judy Gaylord, Sonya Ignatieff, Mary Kramer, Suellen Guenther , Rebecca Mellet, Lorna Anthony. Shirley Travis, Chris Cook, Barbara Boyle, Jim Jordan, Phillip Symon, Marion Sollazzo, Nancy Dobbs, Pat Conroy, Christine Johnston, Lorna Anthony, Jan Thomson.

PART A

The group broke into 5 working groups to complete the task. Using a technique called a TRIZ, each group was provided the following instructions;

Step 1

“Make a list of all you can do to achieve the WORST result imaginable with respect to the STRATEGIC PRIORITY of “Service through Compassionate Action”; “What happens in the WORST social action program EVER?!?!”

Step 2

“Go down your list created in part 1 item by item and ask yourselves, “Is there anything that we are currently doing that in any way shape or form resembles items on this list?”

Be brutally honest to make a second list of all the counterproductive activities/programs/procedures.”

What follows is the summary of their working notes, grouped by theme as much as possible. Multiple bullets means multiple groups identified similar behaviours

How to ensure failure?	Are we doing this now?/is this a problem
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do not donate funds for causes	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep doing the same old same old • Doing the same old same old • Closed to new ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, we are doing some of this • Some feeling of this • New skills required for social action in the culture of corporate domination.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top down process. No broad consultation • Top down, no consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board does not always consult = executive decision
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal disagreements • Animosity • Strong positions can divide us • Only pushing your agenda • One opinion/belief held as correct • Limited, awkward, hard communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some, issue with process of change • Isolated • Yes it happens • Yes it happens • Can split the congregation with passionate sensitivities • Ye. Need to develop skills to respectfully communicate in difficult situation /differing points of view
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judging some people good and some people bad • Shaming those not interested 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We do this some • Yes we do sometimes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor listening • Not listening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too much of this , “ black box”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in silos, compartmentalize • Silo ourselves, work in small groups • Not reaching out to others to save the world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, lack of time to interact. • Yes, we do but it works sometimes • People don't talk to each other enough perhaps not intentionally • Need to network internally and externally
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many goals, need a focus • Projects are too big or there are too many projects for the human and financial resources available • Being spread too thin • Too broad/Too vague • Too grandiose a goal • Assuming others will do the work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there too many goals in social action? • Focus on fewer projects to build congregational engagement • Yes , we can take on so much we split focus • Yes, we have burnout • Yes, inability to prioritize • Focus on bottom line • Social action is not the committee but the community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be unaware of times/affairs 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor reporting, no feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • yes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of commitment • No commitment • Not showing up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some feel this happens
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you don't vote NDP you cannot play • Form cliques • Meet only with people we know • Expect conformity of thought, excluding other perspectives • Exclude age groups • Same people dominate in area which can exclude quieter voices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is occurring • yes • yes, not intentionally • yes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “not my department thinking” • “no ownership when excessive” • coming up with jobs for others to do 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, we see gaps and ask for someone to take it on and they say its someone else's domain • Yes we do this • Individuals need to assume responsibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “That's not the way we do things thinking” • “It's been tried before” • Not open to new ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subtle and nuanced (can read the tea leaves) • Yes it happens
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone has to agree to action • Not open to democratic decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, this feeling exists, human tendency to seek like-minded others • perhaps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing the rules as we go. • Moving targets. • Distraction/detouring from original proposal/task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes this happens but we also need flexibility. • All committee members need the same information • This can happen, it could be for god reason but need communication/accountability.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination • Excluding diversity, how diverse are we really? • Assume we all think the same or fit the same mould • “If I don't get my way I quit” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes we do this • This happens

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No communication • Don't let people know about something until after the event • Not communicating • Not sharing information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is communication but its inadequate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak chairpersons • Aggressive/domineering leaders • Adult leaders have no skills • Lack of training • Ignore training needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes by default • New adult leaders need to be trained and bring in new ideas • We need to look at
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ignore youth • Not include youth • Hardly engage youth • Don't communicate with families of children and youth about these issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing done at big system level • Yes • Needs focus • Need more information about youth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No plan for follow up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are we doing today?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No animals 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live stream failures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • yes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make room for all to be heard/ people who are quiet or have a hard time speaking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • yes, we need to improve
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't recruit and train new members • Not recruiting new members • Lack of recruiting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to work on this • Yes, an issue • Yes this is an issue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet only during the day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does happen
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fight with board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the past
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spread rumours • Rude behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • happened from Incorrect information, not malicious intent • has happened
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not aware of other groups • Isolation from other groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to improve here
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dwell on facts and figures/ intellectualize, bore people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes we do

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unrealistic expectation of membership • We don't all have same values or talents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes we do • Find a way to capitalize on the diversity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't explore deep relationships and motivation of those around us 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, not enough time to explore peoples stories • Listen to peoples stories more
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient understanding of electronic communication e.g. Facebook/social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, we need a "tweeter" • We need to improve in this area
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insult other groups publicly e.g. groups outside church, conservatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are not nonpartisan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ignoring our UU principles • Ignoring the principle "a free and responsible search for meaning and truth" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We do this in our actions and words • Holding differing opinions as valid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend frivolously • Planning beyond our means 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we try to do it all despite reality of finances and human resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going ahead without consensus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, we do this
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing things just because socially/ politically correct ...or not • Dogmatic repetitive actions • Not inclusive of diverse thought/ opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to communicate with other people of other views
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not consulting people who are the purpose pf the compassion action • Ignore stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not sure our actions are always what the group we are trying to help wants or needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't find the fact. Poor research. Act on someone's "truth" or alternative facts • Assuming knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We do this sometimes • Yes we do this and don't check facts

PART B

Themes for development emerged from the working groups and discussion. These included;

1. Communication

- a. **Interpersonal**- as a congregation we need to improve our skills in clear, compassionate communication that allows for a diversity of views and voices. We need skills to manage conflicting opinions to achieve resolution which maintains constructive relationships and the self-esteem and confidence of all involved.
- b. **Organizational** – we need to look at a system wide communication strategy that maximizes the use of all communication modalities, including social media.

2. Training

- a. **Leadership** – training to support committee and congregational work is needed for the current and aspiring/developing leaders.
- b. **Social Change** - the skills to create social change are not the same as 30 years ago. In the corporate world we now inhabit we need to use different strategies and networks for social action. This is an area for congregational learning and training.

3. Governance

- a. **Focus** - need to consider ways to select areas of work that are congregationally affirmed priorities and respect the diversity of thought. The areas for action need to be informed by evidence and fact not just opinion. It will inform the budget process.
- b. **Structures** - Roles and lines of accountability between individual congregants, the Social Responsibility Coalition and the Board need to be developed/clarified

4. Engagement

- a. **Internal** – internally we need to look at how to engage the whole congregation in social action work but especially the children, youth young adults and young families who have not been represented in the sessions to date.

- b. **External**- we need to engage in networks of change with like-minded groups in our communities. This will allow us to leverage available financial and human resources to achieve the greatest impact. E.g. GVAT.

Parking Lot – the parking lot was for thoughts or solution ideas that did not fit in the context of the group’s discussion.

- Meet youth earlier in the church year i.e. in service
- I would like to see the ministers give more leadership in social justice activities
- Need to motivate the congregation as a whole in all our communication around social justice issues
- More information needed via multiple modalities on children’s programming to whole congregation