

I want to write a longer update about the status of our work on the recommendations from Paul Nixon. We started our time with him about a year and a half ago now. As you may remember, he gave us 9 recommendations and suggested we start on four of them. The four we chose were in the areas of: sanctuary upgrading (toward creating the opportunity for more relationship building among our current church attendees), children's ministry, community connection (become a "hub" for the community), and contemporary worship.

As committees have engaged the work on these four areas, each area has evolved or will be evolving as each becomes clearer on the goal of what each is trying to accomplish. As those of you who have been attending in the sanctuary know, much of the work to update it has been done—even though more is still in the works. But part of the point of the updating was to create a fellowship space where we can spend time talking, sharing stories, meeting new people, and welcoming new people after the service. From my point of view, I barely greet anyone at the door leaving after the service because so many people are congregating for fellowship. That's great!

The children's ministry decided to begin its work with an evening called, "Together Tuesdays." That ministry was able to attract some of our Day School parents, among others. But that is not the only focus. The children's ministry also recently did a Trunk or Treat that had as many as 200 people attend. Meaning, the children's ministry's focus is both providing programs but is also about connecting with new people.

The "Hub" committee's focus has been outward. The intention for it has been to explore ways we can connect with the community beyond our walls. The committee laid the groundwork by initiating conversations with at least 13 community leaders, listening to their needs and perspectives. Pastor Kelli is continuing the work, looking for places where things are already happening and then building from that. For instance, we have been involved in the Pride Festival and Parade for a while now. But, this year, we set up a table at the festival and handed out fliers inviting people to a discussion group called "Coffee and Queers and Questions" that met at local coffee shop. Nine people attended—only two were from our church!

Lastly, Paul recommended that we continue to have a contemporary worship service. But, from the beginning of our work, the discussion around it has not been, "How do we redo what we were doing before the pandemic?" As I wrote about in the May newsletter when discussing a ministry in Sacramento called "The Table," the question is, "How do we reach a new group of people we are not presently serving?" That's the main question for that group of which a worship service will be part of what they ultimately do.

However, this group is evolving as well. We are working on plans for a contemporary style service similar to what Catalina had prior to the pandemic. At the same time, much of Pastor Kelli's work will be on connecting with a new group people we are not presently serving. The rationale for her work is simple. With an aging congregation, unless we can connect with a new group of people who are not presently at our church, the future of Catalina is already apparent. So, Pastor Kelli's top priority is to focus on starting a "church within a church." That's what I wrote about in May, and it means it Pastor Kelli needs to make a lot of connections to do that work.

I want to say a little more about that. When I was in high school, my dad started a church out in east Mesa. When he arrived, the location for the church was a dirt field out in the desert. While he was securing funding to help things get started, he spent hours each day going door to door in the community introducing himself to people as a new pastor in the area. So, before he had a building, before he had a worship service, before he had a staff, he had to

spend time connecting to the people in the community. Eventually, of course, he had all of those things (service, staff, etc.). But first, he had to meet new people, of which some would eventually become part of the church. He won multiple awards from the Conference for growing the church. But, it started with connections first, buildings and programs later.

As I have been saying during my time here, our times are different. In my dad's time, the community was growing rapidly. More importantly, many people in the 80s naturally looked for a church when they moved to a new community. Likewise, people were somewhat less apprehensive about a pastor knocking on their door. Like the work of our committees, things have changed and evolved as our communities have done so. Meaning, what worked in the 80s is less likely to work now. Pastor Kelli's methods will be different.

The last thing I want to say, is that if you want to help out with some of the programs, particularly with the community outreach and contemporary worship/new worshipping community at Catalina, we need additional funds to do so. For community outreach, we need additional financial support to host events (including things like meals and coffee gatherings) to get to know our neighbors. We need additional financial support beyond the budget to do something like that.

For the new worshipping community, a coach told me a couple of years ago that he told his church that he needed 30 committed people to start (numbers may vary) and each one of those people needed to commit financially for at least the 1<sup>st</sup> year of the service as well as attend weekly. As of today, we don't have money budgeted to start that work. We will be considering a budget as Pastor Kelli's work becomes more defined. However, I want us all to keep in mind that that work requires labor from volunteers and financial support to go with it.

I hope you see that we have made strides in recommendations. I also hope you understand that each recommendation will evolve as we engage in the work. I think we can celebrate what has already been accomplished and then pray, work, and contribute to further work, that we can likewise celebrate as it is accomplished. Through God's passion and strength, through your prayers, and much more, we can continue to work on the future in store for Catalina!