

# Church Council

## The 5:43 Concluding Report

- How it came about
  - Impact Church Team began discussing an alternative worship service last July with a group of approx 20 people within the church (most did not attend regularly)
  - Utilized data from the Great Plains Conference Insite reports to develop a strategy. These reports provided info for the 2.5 mile radius around WH, containing among other things - demographics and ministry/religious preferences and priorities including top life concerns and trends, reasons for church non-participation, etc.
  - Also reviewed ideas documented by Fresh Expressions and particularly the idea of a dinner church.
  - From this, we decided on a strategy of having a gathering (not a worship service), a safe place, offer friendship, an encouraging message, live upbeat music, light meal, and some fun to get to know each other. The focus - break the bonds of isolation and loneliness. Not intended to be a rebranded Cafe Chapel but something new and different.
  - Intention was for this event to be lay-led.
  - The goal: make connections with neighbors in the 2.5 mile radius of WH and get at least 5-10 steady, new people coming to WH.
  - Decided on a Wed night weekly event lasting 12-weeks from Jan 11 to Mar 29, which we expanded to 14 weeks to give a direct mailer time to work and to integrate with Holy Week.
  - Very intentional on this being an experiment: make choices, review each week, adjust.
- How it went
  - Impact Church team
    - Dwindled over time and we ended up with only 6 people leading the effort: 3 staff (Trudy, Bev, Nate) and 3 lay people (Cheryl, Linda, Dave). It was too small for what was involved.
    - This leadership team met every week to review previous event and response cards and plan the next week.
    - We made mistakes, learned and adapted along the way; it was a true experiment.
    - Kudos to everyone for diving in and doing whatever was needed to pull it off!
  - Volunteers
    - We had wonderful and generous volunteers in many areas including setup, food, music, and speakers. These people put a lot of time and energy into this - kudos to everyone that participated!
    - **But, we did lack adequate volunteers and leadership in several key areas** which put additional responsibility on the small leadership team.
  - Attendance
    - We averaged 54, with a high of 71 (Ash Wed and Jacob McCarty) and a low of 40.
    - We had 27 unique, new people attend over the 14 weeks **but only 8 were repeats with 6 of those being truly neighborhood people.**
    - So, most came once and did not return.
    - **Although 6 was within our goal of 5-10, it was at the lower end of that goal.**
    - It was a multi-generational audience that included the GIFT children and youth. Youth who attended reported they felt "well cared for" at the dinners. Our ICT

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- planning group noted a sense of "safety and joy" that flowed from the time spent together.
- Financially, we did not spend any church budget money.
  - Survey
    - Along with weekly response cards, we asked attendees to complete a survey to help us understand what went well, what could be improved and what they would like to see going forward.
    - 25 surveys were returned; some were for couples so we consider this good representation.
    - Three quarters would like to see a gathering like this continue; rest were maybe.
    - Reasons why were widespread (**validation of the strategy**): sense of community, multi-generational, getting to know people better, nice way to meet people, enjoyed the meal, contemporary music, the message, discussion questions, Christian love.
    - One half prefer weekly; rest monthly or every 2 weeks.
    - Three quarters prefer Wed PM; rest scattered.
    - There was no consistency on what they wanted to see done differently: start time, length, less structured, more time to discuss questions, etc.
    - Unfortunately, when asked "In what roles would you volunteer?", we got no takers for event planning, emcee, music planning, creating ice breakers/discussion questions, or running the A/V. **The lack of volunteers in key areas makes the strategy unsustainable.**
  - Conclusions
    - We did not reach enough neighbors for the time and energy expended; the reason(s) are subjective and warrant further discussion.
    - Many that attended expressed the need for something like this to continue.
    - This strategy and format is unsustainable at WH due to the time and energy required and the lack of volunteers in key positions.
  - Key Lessons Learned
    - Getting more people in leadership positions is critical to make things happen.
    - Having a light meal together is important; things flow better when preceded by a nourishing meal; meal format needs to be kept simple and require less clean-up.
    - A strong music format is important including more upbeat selections in singable keys and a quantity of new songs that fits the bands availability to practice.
    - 6 months of pre-planning helped us think through the process well including research, time to recruit and get buy-in, time for creativity, advertising at community events, and so forth.
    - Evaluating the needs of the neighborhood is difficult and very subjective even with data.
  - Next Steps and Recommendations
    - We have an email list of 200 people with 50-75 of those opening The 5:43 emails. We recommend an email to them with what WH has to offer and a link to subscribe to our church email and LOGOS..
    - Discussions about how to leverage this experiment into the future. Should be led and involve those below the age of 50. It's their perspective, ideas, and energy we need for the future.