

WHITEHORSE UNITED CHURCH  
VISIONING EXERCISE

JUNE 25, 2017

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on behalf of WUC Finance Committee  
June 2017

## Executive Summary

On June 25, at the 2017 AGM for Whitehorse United Church, Church Council and the Finance Committee facilitated an exercise designed to launch a visioning/strategic planning process for the Church.

Approximately 25 people participated. The exercise was led by Jennifer Moorlag and Brenda Dedon; facilitators were Julia Northrup, Barbara Walker, Hank Moorlag, Jennifer Moorlag; and the timekeeper was Susan Rae.

The exercise combined a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis and “dot-mocracy”. The exercise took one hour and was intended to be an introduction to a year-long planning process.

What follows is a report on the exercise to be shared with the broader congregation.

## Why Visioning?

Several factors influenced the decision to hold a facilitated exercise and begin a year-long process:

- Our current strategic plan is due for renewal or rewrite. It was renewed almost five years ago and Council feels that a large process is necessary to ensure the life of the new strategic plan
- Finance committee has been educating the congregation about church finances for over a year. The committee has a full membership of committed, knowledgeable individuals who are concerned about the financial health of the congregations. In January of 2017, WUC passed an 18,000 dollar deficit budget. In June of 2017, it appears that we are on target to meet that budget. This means that we will have fully used up any congregational equity built up in the last few years. This situation is unsustainable!
- Rev. Beverly Brazier has indicated that she will be retiring in the next three to five years. Council feels that we need to start asking ourselves some questions about the future as we face the retirement of a long time, much respected minister.

Church Council would like to explore possibilities for the future BEFORE WUC is in a desperate situation.

## SWOT/Dot-mocracy Exercise Description

The exercise was introduced by Brenda and Jennifer. Brenda (Council Chair) framed the discussion from the Council perspective. Jennifer explained and guided the exercise.

The intention was to do a “quick and dirty” SWOT analysis.

- **Strengths** – what qualities, characteristics, physical structures or programs do participants view as strengths of WUC?
- **Weaknesses** – what qualities, characteristics, physical structures or programs do participants view as internal challenges to WUC?
- **Opportunities** – what qualities, characteristics, physical structures or programs do participants view as opportunities for WUC?
- **Threats** – what qualities, characteristics, physical structures or programs do participants view as external challenges to WUC?

Participants self-selected a topic to start with and rotated through each topic area. There was a time limit of 10 minutes at each topic. At each topic, participants generated a list of thoughts and suggestions to go with the topic.

“Dot-mocracy” - Participants were also given a set of dots (approximately 16 dots each). They were able to use the dots to “vote” on the thoughts/suggestions they felt most strongly resonated with them at each topic area.

SWOT/dot-mocracy lists were compiled and put into digital format to accompany this report as an appendix. Full, “raw” data is included in this report.

Purposely, no conclusions are being drawn from the data at this point. The relatively small number of participants is a good start on the process, but more consultation is required.

## Next Steps

WUC and Finance Committee see the following next steps:

- Summer 2017 - this report will be made available to the congregation
- Fall 2017 - there will be sessions (ie: focus groups, world café’s) to ensure that the information captured at this session is complete and represents the thoughts of the congregation
- Late fall 2017 – WUC Council will consider the visioning documents and develop options for going forward
- January 2018 – at the Annual Financial Meeting options will be presented to WUC for consideration
- February 2018 and beyond – final decisions on options will be made and implementation plans will be developed

## APPENDIX

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### Raw Data from Visioning Exercise

- 1.0 Strengths
- 2.0 Weaknesses (internal challenges)
- 3.0 Opportunities
- 4.0 Threats (external challenges)

## 1.0 STRENGTHS

	Item	Dots
1.	High positive public profile (open-mindedness)	14
2.	Building is well used by community	8
3.	Attractive building – inviting and inexpensive to run	2
4.	Location is good	9
5.	‘We’ give back to the community	
6.	We have an excellent, experienced minister, music director and choir	12
7.	Music with life	2
8.	Congregational involvement	3
9.	Nice people within the church	3
10	Affluent	
11.	Broad array of professions/experience	3
12.	Social experience and connections	6
13.	Personal engagement on key issues of interest	4
14.	Nice to see young people at church – some success	3
15.	We support youth? We don’t	5
16.	Open to supporting people of other faiths “Many paths to God”	9
17.	Inclusive welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (LGBTQ, Hearing Impaired, Culture, religion, physical impairment, Taizé)</li> </ul>	13
18.	Willingness to try technology	2
19.	Youth Ministry- Youth involvement	2

20.	Tolerance of difference of expression	2
21.	Efforts towards Reconciliation	3

## 2.0 WEAKNESSES

	Item	Dots
1.	Bev will retire in the next 3-5 years	6
2.	Aging congregation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• many things geared toward retired people</li> <li>• leadership is aging (will be retiring and maybe moving away)</li> </ul>	6 2 7
3.	Decreasing number of volunteers	1
4.	Aging building	6
5.	Concern over ensuring consistency of rental revenue (amount and application of fee collection)	1
6.	Lack of willingness to do an every family visit	1
7.	Our own expectations may be increasing (ie: more things we want to do)	1
8.	Decreasing number of youth and children (no commitment to children)	8
9.	Concern over where church formal church services “fit” – are we serving all populations? Youth services, Sunday services, music services?	3
10	Same people do everything <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• concern about burnout (and people feeling guilty for saying no)</li> <li>• may not be open to new ideas/new people</li> </ul>	9 2 1
11.	Perception of affluence (congregation members and the Wahl Fund)	2
12.	Inflexible worship space (for numbers and practical purposes) (babyfold may be too small)	8
13.	The language we use can be a barrier (format may be intimidating/exclusive)	3
14.	Lack of clarity of roles and opportunities in the church (people aren’t sure what is expected)	2
15.	Demographically uniform	4

### 3.0 OPPORTUNITIES

	Item	Dots
1.	<p>Redevelop the building in a totally new way.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include affordable housing,</li> <li>• Have space for a variety of spiritual practices (traditional worship, meditation room, First Nations 'fire pit' kind of space in the round and ensure space for new ways of worshipping.</li> </ul>	6 9
2.	Partner with more social agencies and with other social groups	2
3.	<p>Increase diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install art in the sanctuary that reflects cultures (First Nations art, African, etc.</li> <li>• Use music that is reflective of many cultures.</li> <li>• Diversity in Fund Raising – other than food.</li> </ul>	4
4.	<p>Outreach to New Canadians and increased interaction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with Filipino minister</li> <li>• Barbecue or picnic welcoming new Canadians</li> </ul>	6
5.	Encourage and facilitate house churches and small groups (6-8 people), which provide support and a forum for spiritual explorations.	5
6.	<p>Reach out to the newcomer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spell out opportunities to become part of the church family</li> <li>• Link an old-timer to a newcomer (go for coffee, talk about the congregation, committees, what goes on, etc.)</li> <li>• More orientation to the church building</li> <li>• More orientation to the church as a body particularly for those newcomers who have not been involved in church or religion before.</li> <li>• List of people ready to talk with newcomers</li> <li>• Increase individual reaching out to people who are coming to the church for the first time.</li> <li>• Have the Church Directory/Photo album?</li> </ul>	3 5 3 3 1 5
7.	Truth and Reconciliation – meet the many calls to action	6
8.	Increase the use of the kitchen for social outreach	5



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the kitchen for Singles to meet as a group, prepare meals and take them home</li> <li>• Use the kitchen to teach adolescents (and maybe adults) how to cook through a group and have food to take home.</li> </ul>	
9.	Increase sensitivity and awareness of others- welcoming diversity and the poor	
10	Use a van to provide transport for seniors, children and youth to services and functions	6
11.	Use political figures in Whitehorse to raise visibility of WUC (e.g. Larry Bagnell posting on his website when he attends functions at the church.	4
12.	Workshops: expanding knowledge and understanding of diverse groups (gender, race, religion, etc.), health, aging, aging, wills	6
13.	Boots on the Ground: feeding the hungry – soup kitchen, lunches	5

#### 4.0 THREATS (or external challenges)

	Item	Dots
1.	On Sundays, competing activities, eg. hockey, soccer	11
2.	Changing demographics, eg. new arrivals to our community (immigrants) may be connected to other faiths/denominations, so not available to bring in. But, stereotyping them may also be a threat.	7
3.	Our dependency on outside renters.	4
4.	Many people want the benefits of belonging, but not the responsibilities and therefore are deterred from coming.	3
5.	Technology	2
6.	Municipal decisions, eg. Parking	1
7.	People claiming to be 'spiritual', not 'religious' – who reject the trappings of organized religions	10
8.	Possible loss of 'charitable status' in the future, for churches	2
9.	Negative cultural/attitude shifts, eg. the popularity of 'reality TV', competitiveness, adversarial relationships, alienation, 'Trump' attitudes.	6
10	The lack of 'church' background in people's lives, making it difficult to relate	1
11.	Culture of 'non-commitment', and 'over-commitment' – people don't want to make a commitment to something; people who think coming to church means an expectation of having to commit to more; and people who are already over-committed with work and home demands, or commitment to other activities.	15
12.	An unwillingness to be 'defined' as being something, eg. Christian, Anglican, Catholic, and public perceptions that go along with that. And, there may be those who <u>want</u> their faith to be defined by specific principles/values, for whom the United Church is not appealing.	3