Notes from the Small Group Discussion

At the end of the review of prepared remarks by Board members on the annual survey and the 2017-2018 goals, the forum participants gathered for a small-group session.

Participants in the small group discussion:
- Staff: Kathryn Estey
- Congregants: Tom Goldenbaum, Jean Omelchuck, Susan Robinson, Eric Terrell

Discussion started with the Board’s work on white supremacy culture (W.S.C.). Board members shared how we’re working on this, including in part, acting as role model, doing trust building, increasing leadership development.

Congregant is conscious of educational differences with groups, and asked how welcome here do people with less education feel? Should we add a question on ‘class’ to future surveys? Look at folks with different abilities within our own church.

- Results of the survey - question for comparison, do we know the ages of congregants? Response: we know some ages, as it’s an optional question when folks join the church. We know we have many families in the church and few answered the survey.
- How do we get RE families to be involved in future surveys?
  - Have a party with kids in classroom and answer survey then.
  - Stagger survey collections to meet variety of groups schedules (spring break, etc)
- Board member noted that scale for ranking the mission elements is 1-5, not 1-10. A score of “5” means that the respondent thinks the church is meeting that element “extremely well”. Thus, scores in the high 3’s and 4’s represent positive scores
- Wish social justice groups would be working at modeling around white supremacy like the board is.
- Congregant: Didn’t really know (i.e. wasn’t aware) about the survey when we were involved in RE as parents.
- Suggest ‘Seat at the Table’ as a tool and way to do our work.
- Congregant encouraged the Board to get the word out with updates on what we’re doing on white supremacy. Through the Board’s Privilege Evaluation Team (ad hoc committee), Moderator Letter, webpages of the board, etc.
- It is all our job/role to speak up around W.S.C.
• Keep Rev Sinkford and Robin DeAngelo’s sermon in the fore-front of our webpage and other outreach - it was so powerful.
• Use our stories to show/share what we're doing in this work on the board. (As Theo and Matt did in their presentation on that goal.)
• Congregant: encouraged us to continue to break out of the silos - change the labels of those programs in our move to mission based.
• Describe this approach more clearly to the congregation, have discussions.
• Congregant lived in the RE “silo” until their children graduated and now it’s taken time to move to another. Feels SJ, specifically Animal Ministry and CFE need more staff support / time. There is a sense of isolation, and would love to partner with other church functions, like RE - involving kids and families in their work.
• Silos are different sizes and not all are equal.
• Congregant: having RE at same time as services is problematic - perpetuates separation and doesn’t cultivate kids wanting to worship.