

Board/Staff Conversation 2-3-12

Re: Pursuing the Vision, 2/2/12 Woodbury Institute Workshop with Peter Senge & Mary Luti

Ian Holland, facilitator, posed three overarching questions:

- What are the implications for my own ministry and call?
- What are the implications for my home church?
- What are the implications for the MACUCC?

He then invited conversation on each component of the workshop in turn.

Session 1 - Nick Carter and Sarah Drummond

- Seminaries do not know how to educate students for ministry in these changing times.
- Battlestar Gallactica illustration: If you are not afraid to die, death becomes a learning experience.
- Jeremiah 20:7 – The prophet could not help speaking what he saw, despite being a ‘laughingstock’ – can we find vision so compelling that we are unafraid of being laughed at?
- Churches and the MACUCC are not people, they are corporations distinct from people.
- Jesus did not fear death, he overcame death.
- One perspective: everything we have assumed about church is being swept away
- Another perspective: What we have known, fundamentally, is not being swept away; forms may change but core values stay the same.
- The average life expectancy of churches is 80 years. Churches older than this (and we have many) have re-invented themselves multiple times – or, in theological terms, experienced multiple resurrections. What has made that possible?

Session 2 - Peter Senge part I – personal vision

- There is no shared vision without personal vision.
- Ian posed to this group Senge’s question about personal vision: When are you doing what you know you are supposed to be doing? Or, what do you do that you know you are supposed to do?

- Responses included: when I experience peace beyond myself; being in the moment, in the flow; I feel it in my heart, it feels playful, joyful; I have a sense of being in the Spirit; everyone speaks and everyone listens; individuals are more fully available to one another.
- The outcomes of this include; feeling you are in a new place, part of a larger whole, feeling committed, burgeoning creativity.
- The creativity is not that of being clever, but of bringing something into being. Everyone is creative; we make our own vision.
- How are we working together to do this – to bring into reality what God would have us bring?.
- Vision is a focus: what do I want to create and why?

Session 3 - Peter Senge part II - vision, reality and creative tension

- A negative vision seeks to get away from something (e.g. a shrinking congregation, a declining budget) and motivates by fear. This only works in the short term, and the fear tends to stay with you even if you succeed in getting away.
- A positive vision seeks to move towards or achieve something. The motivation is hope, which is the only way to motivate for the long term.
- There's a tension between present reality and the hopes to which we aspire. That tension is the source of energy for moving toward the vision. MLK understood this – he was always trying to make the current reality fully visible, while holding up a picture of what could and should be.
- How do we create an environment where other people are creative? How can we be people around whom visions flourish?
- Quality of listening is one factor.
- When we let go of our attachment to politeness we can have more valuable conversations. What aren't we talking about when Board and Staff are together?
- We can't create without being enmeshed in the lived reality of everyone around the room. We need a mutual understanding of reality in order to be able to create a shared vision.
- Our notion of change is to fix something that is broken. Nature doesn't work that way. It's always growing things in the presence of things that are already there. We need to find what we aspire to which already exists, and ask "how can we help this to grow"? The seeds are already here.
- How to notice what is here, and pay attention to what is most important? This is a leadership practice. Good leaders are more like gardeners than

mechanics. Pay attention to what really matters; your attention and investment will help it grow. Attention comes from intention.

- God is still speaking
- Humanity faces a necessary transition from orienting our lives around the material (as we have for the past 500 years) to orienting our lives around the spiritual.

Session 4 - Mary Luti – Vision at First Church, Cambridge

- Visioning Process at First Church Cambridge
 - Process was to discern God’s vision for the community. They didn’t create a vision, they asked for one.
 - Process of discernment had to be taught.
 - Every constituency in the church was listened to.
 - Notes were made available on the web for everyone to see.
 - A number of things were tried to put the vision into practice that failed. Used a good feedback loop.
 - People in the church internalized the vision.
 - They began to craft imagery and compelling language, then created liturgy and ritual.
- How do we do visioning in this setting of Board and Staff?
- The Still More Excellent way contains glimpses of a vision and is something to build on. It was created after an extensive listening process.
- Each of our churches needs to go through a visioning process.
- The Cross Roads Program overlaps this perfectly.
- “Imagine a Conference of churches that.....”
- We already have everything we need, here and in each of our churches. Jesus did not focus on the stumbling blocks.
- An assertion for all to consider: Provoking vision in our churches is our MACUCC mission in this time.

Work to discern a vision of our Conference of churches will continue at a Board/Staff retreat with Larry Peers on May 11-12, 2012. Larry will visit with the Ministry Team (staff) and Executive Committee (board) on February 15, to hear from each group about how best to proceed in May.