

SUMMARY OF FOLLOW-UP REVIEW OF WANTAGE COMMUNITY CHURCH
SEPTEMBER 2009 (report date 19th October)
WITH COMMENTS

Introduction

At first sight, the occasional visitor to WCC might imagine that very little has changed since the review earlier this year. How wrong they would be! For although as yet there have been few visible changes, a great deal has been going on “behind the scenes”. You are, of course, still in transition, with attendant frustrations and lack of clarity in some areas, but overall it seemed to us that you were on course and at peace, even if the process seems to be taking longer than you might have hoped.

Rather than write two documents, some comments have been made on each section. The comments are the result of discussions on the content of the report in the Connect team, but also with other teams.

1. Leadership

The original review recommended the creation of a new team that was to include the elders, embedded in it. A change of “feel” to the team was also recommended, bringing greater creativity and risk-taking into the leadership, and placing mission at the heart of it. However, currently there is confusion and a lack of clarity over the precise remit of the Connect Team.

Team definition:

Rick’s key request is for clarity, and hopefully we have begun to address this at the family meeting in October. To make it clear:

The review team encouraged us to break away from fixed moulds and we wish very much to break away from a classic “pyramid” church structure. We do not believe that the bible requires this structure, and in many cases we believe that such a structure can inhibit a church, especially a church of our size, from being a body in which every person is fully released to the call on their life. Therefore, the new team is not “The Leadership Team”.

It is, however, a team whose goal is to see every person engaged with the call of God working together to extend the kingdom and build the church. Its goal is to release as much leadership and engagement across the church as is possible, such that all is working towards our common vision. This team doesn’t exist to do everything, it exists to bring togetherness to all that is done and to help release everyone to their call.

New member suggestion

The name of the person suggested by Rick has been removed out of respect for them, should they not feel it is appropriate. However, we are in the process of approaching them.

Atmosphere and style of leadership

The original review suggested a change of *atmosphere* in the way that the team operates, to become more obviously *amongst* the people, the team is still top heavy with highly educated people who can appear distant and aloof.

A more equal scatter of Connect Team members across the D groups might help, preferably without the responsibility to lead them, but ultimately this is not so much about structures as it is about relationship.

Hopefully, we are working hard to develop our softer sides! Ongoing work, all comments and feedback welcome.

2. Building

We recommend you clarify what it is you are looking for/have faith for at this point in your journey, and then ask someone (? Mark Tracey) to explore options and report back.

In fact, we are discussing a potential community venue (possibly for free) with it's owner. The outcome of this discussion will help clarify where we go next on this question.

3. Worship

You have made considerable progress in opening up worship although obviously it is a work in progress.

Agreed!

4. Communication

There is a measure of frustration that there has been so little communication to the church as a whole during this process and Andy's role needs to be clarified further.

We continue to recognise the need to increase communication, we hear the provocation to improve.

5. Mission

There are lots of initiatives being taken to connect with people locally. What is less clear is the extent to which these activities are part of a joined-up strategy that you "own" together. For example, is the "Balsam Family Project" going to "belong" as part of the ministry of WCC, or remain a personal ministry. Or, how do the twenty five or so young people who gather in Mark and Gilly's garden find a bridge into the church family?

We are working on clarification for the community outreach team and how we "bridge the gap" in a number of areas.

6. Social/relational life

In general, it would be our observation that, as a group, the Connect Team is pretty task-orientated and functional, and this probably is reflected in the atmosphere of church life.

Any suggestions on how we improve this welcome- talk about it in your D groups, amongst friends, email Neil & D!

7. Discipleship

The D groups appear to be mostly fellowship groups, but are probably not delivering what their name implies, i.e. provocation, accountability – in short, discipleship. Few people appear to be in any personal pastoring relationships.

A working group (Townsend, Neves, Greigs, Horswells) are going to do this review. There is no plan to change everything for change's sake – rather the goal will be to achieve the maximum life-giving discipleship whilst minimising relational changes. We value the friendships which are already in the groups.

8. Youth

Andy B is releasing overall responsibility for youth, and Mark's departure to Scotland leaves a gap. Rick recommends bold, risk-taking decisions be taken to appoint fresh leadership in this area.

Agree – action needed.

Finally, we would like to commend the new team for their diligence, faithfulness and serving spirit. Neil and D epitomise these strengths and enjoy the wholehearted confidence of those around them. We share that confidence, and feel that WCC is in good hands. You have made significant progress over the last six months, and are well on track. We pray with you, for growing faith and courage to lay hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of you in full measure. Rick & Liz Thomas