

# Discussion paper

For church forum May 5, 7:45-9:00 pm, Friendship centre lounge.

## *How to be one church, with diverse congregations, reaching a diverse city?*

For a number of months, the Board has been discussing “How to be one church, with diverse congregations, reaching a diverse city?” This is promoted by the reality of our life at Opawa, with Sunday, 10:30 a.m. quite different from Sunday, 7 pm, which is quite different from Side Door. The Board invited Rev Phil and Dan McCreeen, from Australia, to help us think in January, preaching at our services and leading Saturday retreats. We want to use the church forum as a chance to process our thinking with interested church people.

### **Part A - Introduction**

1. **Diverse people.** After the resurrection, Mary loves Jesus through her devotion (getting up early to go to the tomb). Peter loves Jesus by vigorous action (running to the tomb). To love Jesus, Thomas wants to ask questions. Different strokes - in devotion, in action, in questioning - for different folks.

2. **A big vision.** Opawa’s vision statement includes “reflecting [Jesus] love in our **communities** and beyond.” The use of the word **communities** suggests a diverse church ministering to a diverse city.

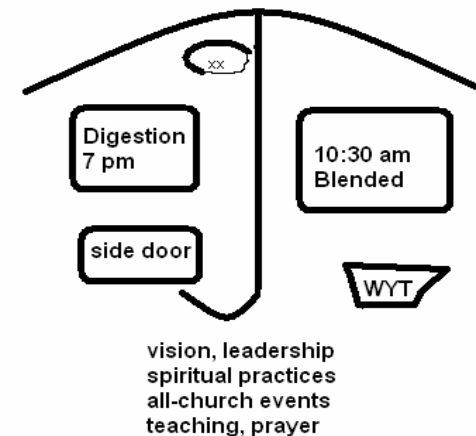
3. **A mission leadership.** The call of Steve and Lynne to Opawa was a call to both pastor what is, and to connect with those who are not yet in church.

4. **Diverse reality.** Opawa currently has three ways to worship: Side Door, Sunday 10:30 am, Digestion (Sunday 7 pm). Each of these is quite different and nourishes different groups. What is more, the Waltham Youth Trust is working away at what will be a unique congregation among some of the Waltham community. Another group at Opawa are praying and preparing espresso, a café congregation, potentially off-site, for people who want to grow through discussion not sermons. Opawa is faced with the challenge of encouraging this uniqueness and building our togetherness.

5. **Biblical foundation.** One church in multiple congregations is not new. The letter to Corinth is addressed to one church that meets in different houses. This suggests one church with a diversity of worship and leadership.

*What do these things mean for our future...*

### **Part B - The Opawa Baptist umbrella?**

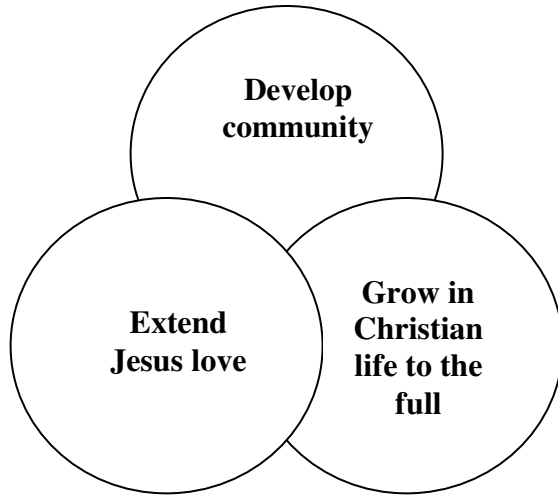


Under one Opawa umbrella, of vision and mission, are diverse congregations.

The handle of the umbrella is strengthened by activities and energy that builds all congregations – pastoral leadership, Plus 5 interns, all-church events, teaching, 24/7 prayer, growth coaching etc.

## Part C - Some Questions

*What is a congregation?* A place to **develop community**, to **grow in Christian life to the full** and to **extend Jesus love**. These could be seen as three overlapping circles.



Each congregation seeks to express these three values, and have freedom to explore different ways. For example, some people might grow in Christian life through sermons, while others grow through viewing art or discussion.

**Develop Community** – participating in relationships, treating each other as God treated us

**Extend Jesus love** - Extend Jesus love in word and deed, managing our resources with a Kingdom vision

**Grow in Christian life** – Applying the Scriptures to our lives, live life to the full, embracing the complete gospel

*How will we be one church?* Under the Opawa umbrella, each congregation is seeking to express the same spiritual values. We will share pastoral leadership. We will share all-church celebrations. We will share combined events like prayer, teaching, growth coaching.

## Part D - Some potential implications for our (immediate) future

1. Continue with the direction of all-church celebrations that gather the whole church. These include our AGM as a meal, church forums, 24/7 prayer, social events, Nor'West People festival.
2. Continue to build the discipling and pastoral structures that could fit any congregation (e.g. growth coaching).
3. A newsletter suitable for all congregations, and a monthly magazine to increase communication.
4. Members are welcomed and people are baptized in either their congregation or at all-church celebrations.
5. Continue the use of video to share highlights from other congregations e.g. baptisms, membership.
6. All congregations seen as equally valid.
7. All congregations have appropriate ways to contribute financially to the whole.
8. Develop more formal leadership groups to guide each congregation. These groups will include where necessary, pastoral team members (note that all pastoral team members are not expected to go to all congregations). These guiding groups are accountable to the Senior Pastor as per Job description and constitution. Each leadership group works to encourage their congregations to express the Opawa vision of growth in God, growth with each other, growth in reaching out and to practise the Opawa spiritual practices.

## Some questions that might stimulate discussion

- Does this definition capture the Biblical vision?
- How might this direction build on what Opawa is today and take us toward God's tomorrow?
- What would you list as essential spiritual practices for Opawa?
- What might be the result of D - practical implications?