

Seeds Church: The Next 20

Connecting Some Visionary Dots on the Verge of the Next Decade of Making Jesus Real

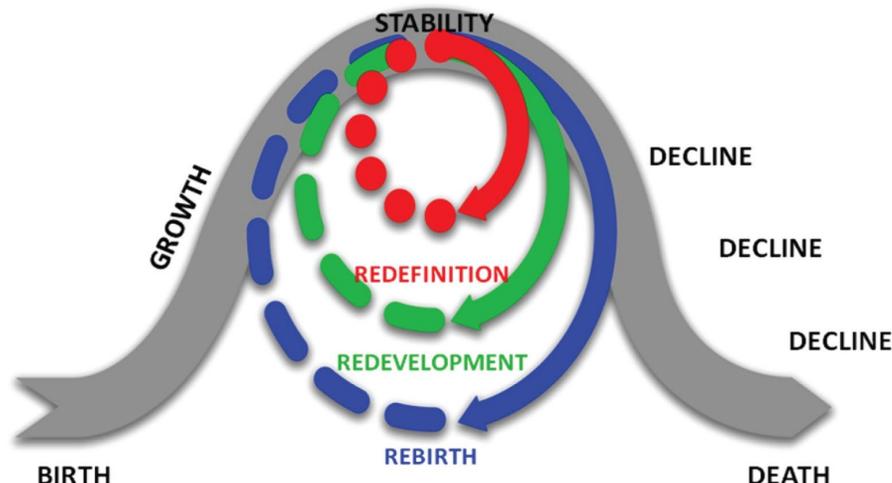
Background

What do we imagine Seeds Church will look like in 20 years? Seems like an impossible question to ask, and yet at this moment we are on the verge of celebrating our 20th year as a church community. In January, the Vision and Lead Teams met on our yearly off site retreat to remember where we were 20 years ago and then turn our gaze off into the distance to imagine where we would be 2 decades from now.

That conversation was incredibly energizing and creative as we paid attention to just how far we have come in living out our purpose to Make Jesus Real. And that recognition gave us the fuel to think into the future and imagine what type of church Seeds is on the way to becoming! More importantly though, the conversation that started in January, and has continued as Vision Team (Jonathan Toews, Cal Funk, Lisa Peter, Paul Peters, Candice Letkeman, Darlene and Ted Enns-Dyck) turned its attention to how we can begin to move towards that envisioned reality.

This short paper will try to summarize the thinking that came out of January and the continued discussions that have followed, in hopes of expanding the conversation within the Seeds community and with partners in our wider community. In other words, we want a larger group of Seeds stakeholders to be on the same page and having the same wider conversation. How do we envision the mission of Make Jesus Real into our third decade of existence?

Further to background, it helps to reflect on the particular place we are at as a congregation. The following image might serve to place us on the life cycle of a congregation.



Remembering our Playground/Playbook

At Seeds, the shaping context for all discussion about strategy or vision is our Playground/Playbook which orientates us to the core mission, values, anchors and model of our community. Our talks in January revolves specifically on how our Core Values (**Open, Connected and Responsive**) and strategic anchors (**Foster Relationships, Take Time to Listen and Move with Purpose**) could be embodied in our church and surrounding community.

As we continue to envision our future, it is critical that we always have this framework in mind, as it helps guide us into areas that align with our church ethos and keep us on track.

Seeds in 2040

What will the Seeds community look like in 2040? It was that question that shaped leadership's imagination and thinking during the 2019 Leadership Retreat, as we dreamed of how our Core values and our mission to Make Jesus Real, might look like in 2 decades. (For a full accounting of the conversation look to the companion document - 2019 Leadership Retreat Notes.pdf)

To give a flavour of the discussion, our Leaders imagined Seeds as a vibrant, energetic church community that had many of the following characteristics:

Open

- Diversity
- Multigenerational
- Freedom
- Open Table
- Freedom to do what needs doing.
- Wide open doors (Metaphor and Literal)
- Invitation, hospitality
- Huge capacity to handle differences
- Odd combinations of people and relationships
- Safe, stable and a home for the homeless
- Intimate
- Knocking down barriers

Connected

- Connected to God, self and others (wholistic)
- Interactive
- Overlap in function and communication as teams
- More story and stories
- Diverse connections
- John 15 Vine and Branches

- Food and Connection: slow, face to face at the table
- Slowing down to counteract the speed of living.
- An anchor in a world of divisiveness
- Circles
- Children a part of worship in an intentional way
- Intergenerational connections, children and elderly
- Expressing views and learning from each other.
- Sharing what we have
- More connected to our environment.

Responsive

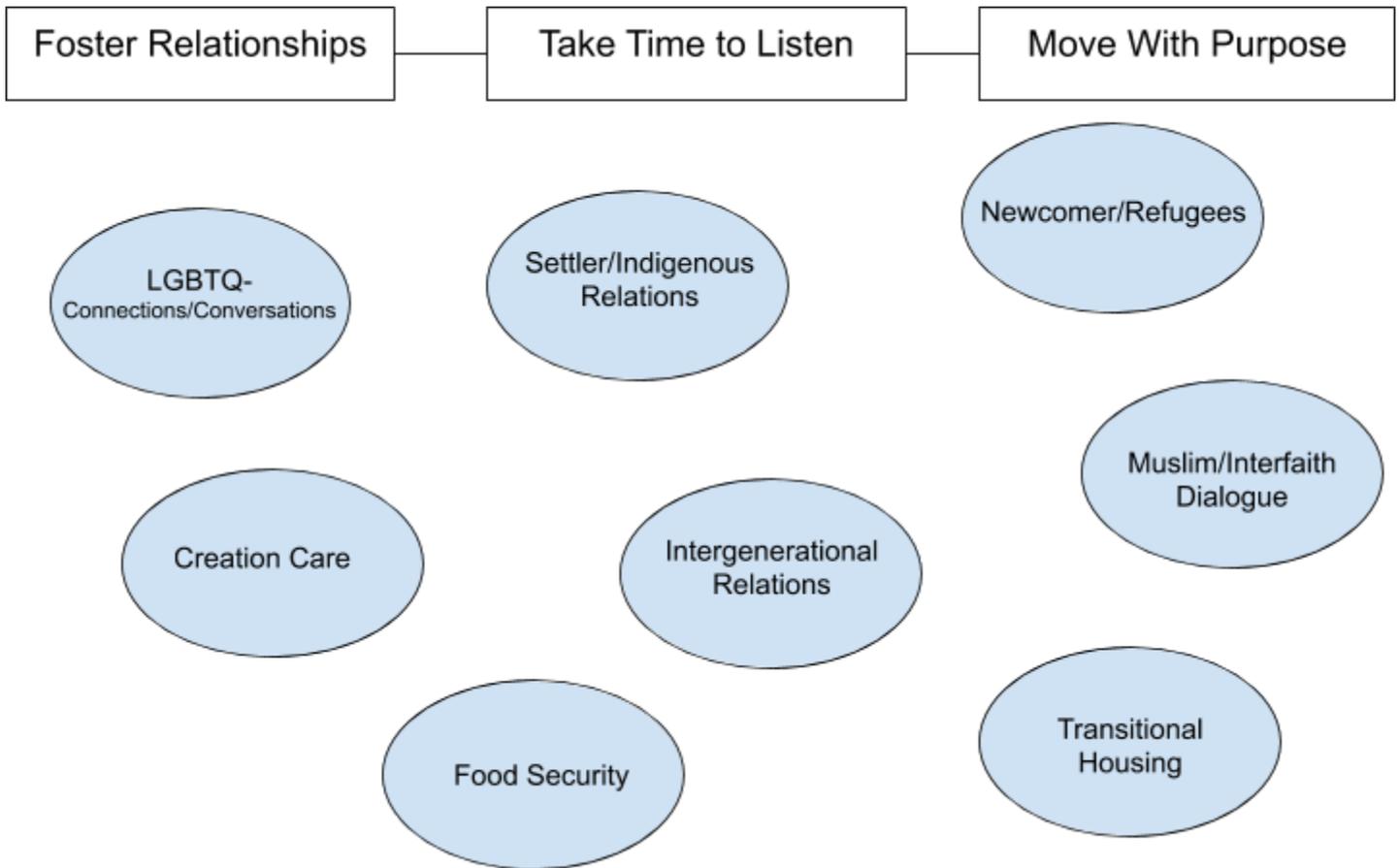
- Known as first responders in our community
- Working with other organizations/churches
- A beacon of light and love in the face of tragedies
- Zechariah 6:15 - prophetic word to our community 10 years ago. "People will come from faraway places to pitch in and rebuild the Temple of God. This will confirm that God-of-the-Angel-Armies did, in fact, send me to you. All this follows as you put your minds to a life of **responsive obedience to the voice of your God.**"
- Commerce
- Edgy
- Trial and Error
- Deeper relationships with our Indigenous Peoples
- Love
- Default is yes
- Removing barriers
- Generosity
- Fast and Slow Church at the same time
- Relevant and connected to our present reality.

Such an exercise of visioning and dreaming can seem out of touch with present realities, but is also a beautiful picture of what our community already values and what is possible if we continue to *"put our minds to a life of responsive obedience to the voice of our God."*

It is also good to remember that if we have dreams about where we will be in 20 years, we must be committed to moving with purpose towards that imagined future today. Therefore the most important questions of the moment are to discern our next steps and emphases. Since the retreat, vision team has taken up this task, by initiating conversations inside and outside Seeds and these discussions will continue into the future as we **foster relationships** with our community (Seeds and beyond), **take time to listen** (God, self and others) and discern how we will **move with purpose**.

What is bubbling to the Surface?

The following emphases have been rising out of our discussions so far. Some are continuations of conversations that were begun over the last decade, while others are just becoming a part of our communal vision. Here is a non exhaustive list of larger community issues that grow out of our dreams for the future.



Next Steps

So...where to from here?

The opportunities are plentiful and diverse. We must remind ourselves that this is a 20 year plan; not everything will be accomplished this year.

So ...what have we learnt through our process so far? There are 3 recurring themes that have come out of recent conversations.

1. The “Larger Community”
2. The “Newcomers” experience
3. The “eXchange” and its underutilized footprint

1. The larger community

As we met with community leaders, themes emerged. The need for a community gathering place where we could experience.....

- Common meals
 - i. Feeding the hungry
 - ii. Finding reasons to sit across from people we wouldn't otherwise connect with
 - iii. Work experience for at risk youth
- Educational opportunities
 - i. Partner with and provide a space for “Regional connections”
 1. Teaching
 2. Job training
 3. Commerce/ Pop up markets or.....
 - ii. Partner with the school division
 1. Mentoring
 2. Job training
 - iii. Partner with.....

2. Newcomers

The Altona and surrounding community has embraced Newcomers experience. As we've grown to know or new friends, we've come to acknowledge needs.

- Need for a place of purposeful connection
- Opportunity to learn and teach
- An opportunity for commerce
 - i. Prepare and sell food
 - ii. Popup market for food and.....
- Need for transitional housing

3. eXchange

The original vision for the eXchange was to create a place for the community to gather, for it to be more than where the congregation of “Seeds” gathers.

- For some time we’ve been exploring the idea of revamping and updating the kitchen and foyer
- We own property around our building

With this in mind, we’ve started to process what could be focusing our attention on in the next year or two. We’ve broken this into 2 projects which would likely involve different groups of people and could be tackled at different times.

Project 1 - eXchange Revamp

- i. Renovate kitchen and foyer
 - 1. Incorporate a commercial kitchen
 - 2. Create a flex space that allows for
 - a. Teaching opportunities
 - b. Commerce/pop up markets
- ii. Coffee shop/restaurant atmosphere. Partner with.....
 - 1. Borderland School division
 - 2. Regional connections
 - 3. Town of Altona rec department

Project 2 - Housing Project Partnership

- iii. Partner with a non-profit (Build A Village or....??)
 - 1. Utilize our additional land for new transitional housing space