

## **Our Playground.**

We exist to Make Jesus Real. We value openness, connection and responsiveness and live out our mission by being anchored in fostering relationships, taking time to listen and moving with purpose.

## **Our Process**

As we approached our 20 birthday in 2020, we dreamt as a leadership and congregation about what it would be like to live out our playground into the next 2 decades. We asked each other how we could imagine our community shifting and transforming as we connected to our core calling to 'Make Jesus Real.'

Countless dreams were unearthed in this process describing how our community would build on the areas we have engaged in the past and present and visions of movement into new areas and needs. Many of you were directly involved with this process.

1. LGBTQ+ Connections and Conversations
2. Settler/Indigenous Relations
3. Creation Care
4. Food Security
5. Intergenerational Relations
6. Interfaith Dialogue ( Muslim Community)
7. Transition Housing
8. Newcomers/Refugees

3 Major Themes were identified for Next Steps by Vision Team.

1. The "Larger" Community
2. The "Newcomers" Experience
3. The eXchange - Redesign and renos for greater utilization to connect to the wider community.

## **Our Connections**

Vision Team took the "time to listen" and "foster relationships" with leaders in the larger community to unearth the unique needs and opportunities in Altona and surrounding area. We asked a simple question: what do you believe to be the greatest needs of our community?

Some of the conversations were with the following people and organizations:

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Town of Altona - Mayor and CAO</li> <li>2. Police Chief</li> <li>3. Altona and Area Family Resource</li> <li>4. Altona and Area Food Bank</li> <li>5. CommUNITY Support Team</li> <li>6. Altona Foundation</li> <li>7. Pembina Valley Pride</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Regional Connections</li> <li>9. Build A Village</li> <li>10. Pembina Valley Local Immigration Partnership</li> <li>11. ACAN - Altona Community Action Network</li> <li>12. Pembina Valley Pharmacy</li> <li>13. Winkler Central Station</li> <li>14. Other interested individuals.</li> </ol>
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### What was unearthed? What were the themes that we heard?

**Connection** - Our community has grown and become more diverse over the last 20 years, and we see the need to provide a place to develop connections, especially but not limited to, the most disconnected and under-served. Further, although our community is well served by many organizations and services, obstacles remain for people to access the full array of opportunities.

**Coaching/Advocacy** - When social resources are needed (food security, family and financial support, mental health support, etc.) knowledgeable mentors and coaches are needed to connect people to the best resources in the best way. This means trained staff/volunteers who can help people make the right contacts.

**Open/safe places** - Our diversity as a community is a strength and shines best when everyone finds a place of safety, acceptance and dignity to deal with the challenges we face in life. We want to foster a community that embraces difference as a powerful force of community well being.

**Diverse leadership and empowerment** - We desire to grow an organization that is true to what our community actually looks like; multi-faith, inclusive, broad local ownership and diverse leadership (race/gender/religion/class).

### Our Vision of an Altona Community Exchange

We see a need for a centralized place in Altona, that allows for many existing organizations (Food bank, Regional connections, Family Resource, ect.) and new initiatives (community meal, pop up food markets, etc), to come together under one umbrella in order for there to be a more holistic partnering, advocacy and connection with one another. We envision this space offering people from all socioeconomic, religious, racial, gender backgrounds to come together for conversation, resourcing, support and community.

The Altona Community Exchange exists to remove obstacles for people to connect to resources, support and community in Altona and surrounding area .It would do this by

- Developing a space for a myriad of organizations and people to connect and partner together.
- Training staff/volunteers to understand people's needs so that they can be coached towards the most helpful resources and support.

- Creating a gathering space for community connection (especially around food).

#### Working Assumptions.

- Although a great deal of energy for this idea has arisen out of Seeds, we see this as a planting endeavour, not unlike the way Seeds Church was planted over 20 years ago.
- To remove obstacles, we need to be broadly owned by a diverse group of stakeholders and leaders in the community (church, social services, community groups and interested individuals) ie. not centered around one faith expression.
- Housed in a central location that allows many existing organizations to work together and be a one stop location for people accessing services.
  - We think the exchange building would be an ideal place for such an endeavour, but we need to remain open to other ideas and/or locations that are deemed to be more suitable.
  - We believe to address obstacles, we should be prepared to consider divesting of our building and/or rebranding it to bring about this vision. In that case the plan would be to secure space for Seeds Church to continue meeting and using the new space.

#### **Our Why? Why would we as a church be called to this work?**

In Acts 4 - the newly inaugurated church community was described in this way.

*32-33 The whole congregation of believers was united as one—one heart, one mind! They didn't even claim ownership of their own possessions. No one said, "That's mine; you can't have it." They shared everything. The apostles gave powerful witness to the resurrection of the Master Jesus, and grace was on all of them.*

*34-35 And so it turned out that not a person among them was needy. Those who owned fields or houses sold them and brought the price of the sale to the apostles and made an offering of it. The apostles then distributed it according to each person's need.*

In a similar way we are being called to witness to the reality of Jesus, by sharing what we have with our community in hopes of being a community where "not a person among us was needy."

**Our Next Step** - Move to gather a group of interested people to do a focus group on the potential of developing an Altona Community Exchange.

#### **Questions**

What excites you about this possibility?

What questions do you have about this direction?

What more do you need to know to move forward on this direction?