



## UPDATE ON NEW BEGINNINGS CHURCHES

### Regional Board meeting - February 28, 2009

Can you believe that it was September, 2007 when we began our New Beginnings program in partnership with Church Extension?

The responses of our eleven churches are as varied at each of the churches themselves. All but one congregation has moved ahead in developing their next steps of forward movement.

Churches participating in this round of New Beginnings are: All Pilgrims, Chelan, Coeur d'Alene, Findlay Street, Lacey, Longview, Olympia, Othello, Queen Anne, Prosser, Walla Walla.

As congregations finished their round of Cottage Meetings they moved to their next step in the process.

Some churches received an Assessment Report that asked questions about mission focus and change. Those congregations chose to engage in focused Bible study along with spiritual discernment as their next steps.

Two congregations engaged in further formal study about their options, calling upon Rick Morse and Rick Reisinger of Church Extension to come for an extensive follow-up consultation. In each of these cases "A Ministry Plan" was developed by the consultant team. Each of these two churches is exploring the implications of this ministry plan and the next steps required.

One of our congregations is well on their way to partner with Church Extensions New Church Initiative to call a bilingual new church pastor to help the congregation become a that ministers to both Caucasian and Hispanic persons. Another congregation is working through the possibility of a parallel start of a new congregation in their community focusing on younger generations that are not now in their congregation.

Against the backdrop of their Assessment Report another of our congregations has selected property to purchase in a geographic target area in their community. The data in their report will help shape how they envision their ministry and their new building program. The challenge of re-developing an existing physical plant in a growing urban area is moving ahead in another congregation with the information in their Assessment Report and the help of a paid professional consultant.

One congregation has leased their facilities, retaining one room for an office and another for worship and is meeting weekly for worship. Another congregation has used the Assessment to assist in a process of seeking full-time pastoral leadership and they are currently interviewing potential candidates.

One learning for us and CE is that a variety of resourcing needs to be available as the Assessment Report is being processed by each congregation. Rebecca and I have been support for many; Church Extension has done on-site follow-up and lots of email support. All of us have had to scramble at times to keep up with what was needed and will continue to be needed.

We are happy that Vancouver (who did not join the first time) has chosen to be involved with an emerging Portland cluster meeting in March and then in June. I will supply leadership in this effort.

While change is a challenge for each of these churches, I am convinced all of them would be back where they were if they had not done New Beginnings. New and stronger lay leadership is developing, movement is occurring and informed choices for the future can happen. Rebecca has provided significant insight to the churches, she has adjusted her schedule and work load to accommodate many more visits and meetings to support this effort. I have appreciated her assistance to me as I have served as the volunteer coordinator.

In many ways the Northwest Region is the "Poster Child" for New Beginnings. Our work is allowing Church Extension to offer a stronger and more tested model of transformation and change to the whole church.

- Marvin Eckfeldt