

The following questions were expressed in table group responses on August 14. This is an attempt to provide concise answers.

Q. Why are we investing time and energy in transition work?

A. During a long and effective pastorate, a congregation becomes comfortable with unique dynamics of that relationship. But without reflection during transition, these dynamics can be uncritically projected into the next relationship. Transition is a time to sort out unique dynamics from generic dynamics. Transition is an investment in future congregational health.

Q. What's the difference between mission and vision statements?

A. A mission statement concisely answers two foundational questions: Who are we? Why do we exist? Mission is about *being*. The statement may fit other congregations and function well for many years.

A vision statement is ideally a one-page strategic plan for the next 3-5 years which flows out of our mission. It contains a few goals, each with measurable and dated objectives. Vision is more about *doing*, and is congregation specific.

Q. Why do we need a new mission statement?

A. A *new* statement is not necessarily needed. We need to either intentionally embrace the current mission statement (written 21 years ago by MC USA for all its congregations), or write a new one.

Q. Shalom has devoted great energy in direction processes over the years, with mixed results. Why will it work this time?

A. Previous processes either began with an outreach focus, or soon took on that focus. Transition focus is broader and more foundational. Recent congregational conversations indicate that without a common mission, it will be difficult to agree on vision. A family cannot make a healthy decision about vacation plans, if differing purposes exist for vacation: visit family, education, entertainment, relaxation, tourism,

strengthen relationships, impress others, etc.

Q. How can we come to consensus on mission and vision?

A. Someone affirmed transition work because we are already “hearing voices we don’t usually hear.” Vision process maximizes this dynamic. Consensus develops because everyone had input throughout the process.

Q. We need at least 60% of active folk to sign up in advance for the vision process this winter. What if we fall short?

A. In my experience, such anxiety is normal; and congregations always reach that threshold. Early processes build support for vision work.

Q. We have minimal time for additional meetings, and some of us live far away from the meeting place.

A. Transition has a significant preventative dynamic. Time invested in transition, saves time in the future by reducing conflicts and excessive processing of new issues or proposals. We are attempting to minimize additional meetings, but a few will be needed, especially in the vision process which cannot be accomplished in monthly meetings. As my father would say: “You can spend one day and \$200 to fix a plumbing problem, and redo it every year; or you can spend two days and \$500, and redo it every 20 years.”

Q. I am tired of talking about outreach.

A. Let’s avoid equating vision with outreach. A new vision may have an outreach component, but it will be much more than outreach.

Q. What if I cannot affirm the new vision?

A. That’s possible. But since it is congregational in nature, it is unlikely for those who participate in the process to not affirm it

Q What if this splits up the church?

A. Discussing foundational matters requires vulnerability. In my experience, the Holy Spirit brings greater unity in congregations which

prayerfully and authentically enter into transition work.

- When a congregation *sets a new direction*, a few will leave.
- When a congregation *lacks a clear direction*, a few will leave.

Q. Why are we doing transition work when many are away?

A. Another comment answers this! “*Next April? You mean we are going to do this for that long?*” We started slow because it was summer. We have distributed resources used, and results to all. Recordings are posted on Shalom’s website.

Q Will Dagne & Carol have to stay away for three years?

A. The exit agreement called for absence from worship services for the first six months of transition, that is until November 1, 2016.

Q. Where will Brian end up?

A. Shalom leadership communicated to the congregation last fall that this question cannot be addressed until clarity of vision and pastoral staffing model is accomplished. Both are priority objectives for the transitional period. Brian has expressed his desire for the congregation to first find clarity and unity in these areas.

Q. With Gary’s arrival, we don’t know which pastor to call.

A. The quick answer: contact either one anytime, via e-mail, text or cell phone. Brian and Gary meet together at least three times a month, and are functioning as co-pastors, with separate areas:

- Brian: Outreach & Congregational Life;
- Gary: Transition and Worship.

Both are aware what’s happening in the other’s areas of oversight. For more details, please see the proposal for pastoral staffing during the transition period, included in this mailing. -Gary Martin

Looking Ahead:

Sept. 4 9:30a.m. *Worship and work are one?* Psalm 100 Wilma Bailey

Sept. 11 9:30a.m. *The Lord Always Wins His Battles* 1 Sam. 17 Gary

11:00 a.m. Congregational Dialogue #4: Mission Statement

Sept. 18 9:30 a.m. Sermon-Brian

Gary’s projected in town schedule: Sept. 11-14, 18-19