

**Compilation of notes from AMC Vision III Retreat
Friday, January 11, 2008**

Session 1: Questions

As you review the last six years of life and activity at AMC, where have you seen God at work?

- By how we take care of each other
- In our pastors – more involved in the community/ACC/local ministerium
- Many gifts brought by members
- Children's ministry
- Wisdom and maturity to think outside the box, experiments, open mindedness
- Listening to local community **
- Known for serving others
- Youth articulating beliefs – freedom to question **
- Influence of church on our youth through mentoring *
- Brining new people to church
- Hearing from other individuals, especially those involved with meetings with Iranian president
- Local activities – DSECC, MRC, Porch project, rental assistance, Summit Quest, etc. *****
- Seeing people be helped whether internal or external
- Ministry teams – gives opportunities to respond to the spirit's moving, helped us to look for opportunities in our congregation (i.e. respite care for Philip Rutt)
- Sunday soup, fellowship time
- Continue to have new people attending AMC
- Missional challenge fund – impressive way of being missional
- When someone expresses a need, members rally and respond
- Peace theology
- Outreach commission – especially the involvement of youth in mission activities
- Young adults going to serve – and being able to generate funds to support them
- Focus on scripture more than we used to *
- Studying poverty
- Stimulating worship *
- Quizzing team
- Seeing God at work through AMC in those serving overseas **
- Variety of Sunday school topics
- Music program – getting more people involved
- Response of members to MDS
- Dedicated and caring teachers

Have you been personally challenged or changed? If so, how? How have you grown as a disciple of Jesus?

- By Michael Hardin class *
- To extend myself to care for others – a growth process, thus better disciples
- Pastors challenge us to be more involved in community
- Challenged to take a more active role in children’s ministry/clubs
- Vision process booklet provides long list of challenge fund proposals – provided opportunities for people to be challenged
- Sojourners group has been transforming – four years being with same 22 people – deep sharing *
- Challenged to get others involved
- Many challenges outside church – how do we get involved in these challenges
- Great potential to become more involved with DSECC *
- Remaining undivided by potentially divisive issues – building project
- Challenge in working with MYF – seeing trends of church being less prioritized in our lives
- I’ve been attending and have stayed on as a member
- I’ve found it more challenging and haven’t grown as much as I’d have liked
- The church has nurtured my children and has taught them Anabaptist values *
- I’ve participated in things that I never thought I’d do. AMC is for me, stability.
- Challenged to get to know people in the congregation because of size – has become a personal goal
- Size of congregation – lack of personal engagement as a group – little initiative for personal nurtured growth
- Challenge in hearing many people’s expectations, how to speak to all expectations with integrity
- Challenge to see better attendance in Christian education and discipleship hour
- Challenge to have faith in God and believe in the power of prayer
- ECAPC class challenged faith
- Dwelling with scripture class – learned where to plug into community and provide a service

Generate a list of “prouds” and “sorries.” What is it that you feel good and/or not so good about what is going on right now within AMC.

Good/proud

- Sharing about physical/mental illness and feeling accepted
- Baptism experience
- Freeing of a member to move on
- Welcome center
- Music – acapella and instrumental
- Congregation’s global view and support of international programs ***
- Sent committee – when next generation is involved (Friendship Community visit)
- DH Model allows groups to emerge *
- DSECC connection very positive, very respected day care in community **
- Caring for each other *

- Letting the spirit work
- Community involvement/listening *
- Multiple generations
- A seeker's church
- Sensitivity to new needs
- When adult children visit the church, they are welcomed
- Adult children listed in the directory
- Challenged to push out into community
- Welcoming group; becoming more intentional about welcoming
- MYF program ***
- Quizzing
- Great children's programs **
- Pastors for pushing us intellectually
- Anabaptist theology
- Bible teaching
- People respond to needs/prepare meals **
- Movement, instruction and formation of house church groups *
- Women are treated as intelligent human beings
- I have a sense of coming home, stability *
- Feeling cared for, loved and accepted
- Children's story
- Ability to discuss difficult/serious issues but still respect each other (building project)
- Outreach
-

Not good/sorry

- Lack of participation/membership of young adults; not having a space for young adults (20-30) **
- Friendliness still needs work
- The church has not moved into welcoming gays/lesbians
- Building project didn't pass – we are hindered because of space ****
- Haven't found ways to move beyond our ethnicity
- People aren't starting more groups like Sojourners. Many people are yearning for Sojourner style of connection.
- Miss stimulation of people from outside when Christian Ed committee brought in outside speakers
- New people have trouble navigating our church because of way we do Sunday school. No obvious place to go.
- Foyer packed with people is off-putting
- Not as easy to get into a house church *
- Difficulty in finding intimacy/connections **
- Yearn to befriend people who come into AMC who did not grow up Mennonite. We say we want people to come, but we are so Mennonite. *

- Losing families with young children (exit interview?) ***
- Gap between nursery and Jr. MYF; programs not evident
- Wish we had more youth participation
- Wish we kept in closer contact with college students
- Younger adults don't participate in discernment Sundays
- So few of parents have adult children attending this church
- Adult children of this church who don't attend church at all
- No young adults right out of high school
- We don't have sound proofing in assembly room for better conversation
- Lack of connection. Need more ways/opportunities to connect. *
- Not enough support for young families
- We are inviting/welcoming to a certain niche of people; less attractive to working class *
- Worship and time together is very programmed; no spontaneity
- Too much emphasis on peace stance; may be alienating to those not from Mennonite backgrounds
- How do you get next generation to attend AMC?
- Not enough involvement of broad cross-section of church
- Not more people participate in discipleship hour classes
- Not outspoken about our social consciousness
- Don't seem to have a fire or zeal about mission
- Lack of investment in people under 50
- The issue is not how to be a community church, but how to get excited about being church for each other and how to encourage ownership of AMC with young adults

Gifts/Passions

- Desire: to write a program for non-profits to show both numbers (\$) and the story, to enable or encourage informed giving
- Musical gifts used
- Sometimes gifts are discovered or revealed – one onion peel at a time
- Gift utilization relies on members making their gifts known – volunteering is a way of getting placed/used
- Gifts of hospitality have been used *
- Little things important and enjoy doing – usher, library, conversation
- Committees would help new people feel connected
- Passion is in other activities in world that are supported by AMC like peace education, Middle East issues
- Chose to take a break for a while, gifts were used in past, doing small things now
- Openness to allowing people to do what they want to
- Sense that some people feel like they can't "make the grade", not good enough to volunteer
- Hard to find a balance; some don't want to do anything, some put name on list but aren't asked

- Yes, my gifts have been used, but my own time limits involvement
- Harder for new people to become involved
- How do we foster diversity? Racial and economic
- Hesitancy to become involved with DSECC families
- Church is self-selected
- Sharing Anabaptist faith as opposed to God and country churches
- Upholding Anabaptist values; there is a need for these alternative voices in the world
- Why haven't passions needed to be used at AMC; we can use them elsewhere – workplace, community groups
- Yes, involvement with Sunday soup – nice to be involved with something that does not require a long-term commitment
- Feel like a part of AMC community, but how does that extend beyond the walls of the church?
- Yes, involved with committees, etc.
- Harder to be involved when you are not native speaker
- We have Spanish speakers in our church whose gifts aren't utilized
- Yes, even if you aren't a member, you are invited to be involved and on a committee
- Feel very blessed that for many years my passions could be used and met as part of church's ministry
- Christmas offering supporting a school
- Church provides a foundation for when we talk to community or work on projects outside the church
- Yes, my gifts and passions have been used
- No, but I feel supported by AMC and have developed gifts and skills
- Yes, a DSECC director – unique situation
- Yes, organizing, facilitating and coming up with ideas
- Yes, I've done things that have interested me and that feels good
- Yes, helping with Sunday school class
- Yes, youth work in the past; ministry team involvement
- Yes, led Sunday school class, counseling, various volunteer involvement in community
- Yes, I believe we should do what we're asked
- Yes, involvement with kids * and pastoral team
- Yes, but so differently than was the case for my parents. I could/should be more focused on AMC.
- My passion hasn't happened – my calling is for people with special needs. I have not been able to act on that passion here at AMC.
- My family's special needs have trouble when we interact with AMC
- My gifts have been used to a degree
- Moving within the AMC community (being overseas for various intervals) – a challenge in how to be involved with AMC. Felt strong support being far away.

- Yes, invitations to join committees, take on committee tasks, planning and opportunities
- Yes, music and singing *
- Yes, coffee time, serve, meet people
- Lots of opportunities, not enough time
- Yes, used to form group to support a family in the congregation
- Yes, volunteer coordination
- Yes, take pictures of congregation activities
- Lots of people in congregation doing a lot of things we don't know about
- Yes, writing
- Yes, hosting people

Is AMC making a difference for you?

- Yes, AMC responds to needs when laid before us **
- Do we ask enough of ourselves? Can we allow ministers to ask more of us?
- Community: Homes of Hope, Summit Quest, Akron Elementary tutors, rental assistance *
- House church is making a difference
- Voluntary service opportunities for my kids
- Yes, we have been at the receiving end of kindness at the loss of family members
- Yes, worship, house church, mission outreach
- Yes, being at the receiving end after surgery
- Do we care as much for those near to us as those far away?
- Freer to be active far away as opposed to right here
- Welcomers on Sunday mornings – helping people feel welcome
- Making a difference for us individually

**Compilation of notes from AMC Vision III Retreat
Saturday, January 12, 2008**

Session I:

Naming our fears and ambivalence about “Community Church”

What threatens us?

- Would we lose our Mennonite identity? Change it? Water it down? *****
- If we invite people from different socioeconomic groups, is that okay?
- It is a challenge to drop labels and welcome all
- People go where they feel comfortable – no matter the title or denominational affiliation
- Who are we talking about when we say “community” *****
- Definition should not limit us *
- My neighbor wouldn’t understand us **
- We are a church for the community, not a community church
- Struggle with what is the church. We work in the community all week *, come together to be discipled and go back out, or are we to be inviting the community?
- Feel badly that low income/little education are not comfortable here
- Fear that we need to market ourselves
- Imposing on others our cultural mores/visa versa
- We are a global church – community is much bigger for us than the Akron/Ephrata area
- Tension between what it means to be local and/or global – are we changing our focus?
- Community connections necessitate long-term commitments – do we have that energy?
- We are changed by mission. Do we want to be changed that much? Are we open to allow change from people we open ourselves to?
- To what extent are we willing to change
- Don’t have to change name to be welcoming
- Community engagement – does that imply recruitment of new members? Can you be engaged in the community without attracting new members?
- Fear of changing name
- At this point are we more comfortable serving the community than going out and drawing people in?
- Fear that we become too comfortable serving the community and not allowing ourselves to be changed by that
- Tension of doing for and walking with neighbors
- The term “community” has been taken by churches that offer Starbucks, gyms, etc.
- We minister to people “across the street” how do we get hold of it; helping people we don’t know – sometimes it happens naturally
- Does the church unleash our various skills to help us go out and serve the community with our skills/passions?

- Let's not change what happens on Sunday morning

Where is God in this question?

- Important question. What does God want us to do or be? We are capable people, do we operate based on that?
- We need to make sure that we are balanced in our approach – nurturing relationships in our immediate circle and extended circles
- We are a community church when we send people overseas; the delegation to Argentina, etc.
- We are engaged more in the local community that we used to be; this is good
- Sunday morning worship energizes us to be community the rest of the week

How can we care for one another and reach out to the community in need?

- We are already doing this – can we do more for those outsiders?
- We need to celebrate what we are already doing
- As we listen to the needs outside of AMC, we also need to listen to the needs of the AMC community.

**Compilation of notes from AMC Vision III Retreat
Saturday, January 12, 2008**

Session II:

How can AMC be a “City on a Hill”

What are our unique gifts, vision, contributions as a church?

- Peace/Anabaptist position *****
- MCC – known through the world *
- History of service throughout the world **
- Educated/articulate ***
- Global focus **
- Community involvement **
- Safe space for questions/processing issues that are not talked about in other congregations ***
- A lot of experts in various fields – broad range of experiences **
- Talent of children – music programs
- People are allowed to use gifts *
- Leadership strengths
- Experts at care-giving, someone who can listen and help carry the burden
- Listening ministry team
- Majority of work of the church is as individuals involved in the community and around the world
- There are good people and our lives are enriched by each other
- Reaching out through social service ministries
- Members come from a lot of different places, not just Lancaster County *
- Many members live locally
- Accepting of outsiders
- House churches
- Many like-minded people
- Easy for children to bring friends to church
- Tend to be idealists

How can we be a catalyst for Christ and community?

- By treating everyone the same
- By inviting others to be involved, side by side, in our outreach programming
- How many people attending AMC still feel like guests?
- How we articulate “good news” – work on distinction
- Venture club for the community
- To be known as a church in the community where you can come for help
- Connections with DSECC families who are right here; staff support, scholarships for families with lower incomes
- Be more Christ like – feed hungry, provide homes, accept others

- Being before doing
- Being forgiving, non-judgemental

How can AMC be a gracious guest in our host community?

- Participating in community projects – not just our service projects
- Community meals
- Meals on wheels
- Volunteerism
- Involvement in ministerium
- Attending events in other congregations
- Do we put people off by our professionalism?
- Support the community through money, clean-up
- Difficult to answer: what is our host community offering us? What does the surrounding community say about us?
- Are we really a guest in our community? Guests are invited – was AMC invited? Are we now?

**Compilation of notes from AMC Vision III Retreat
Saturday, January 12, 2008**

Session III:

What is missing at AMC?

- Fellowship space *****
- Young adults, programs for young adults *****
- Young families/young married couples ***
- Gym or multi-purpose room
- Space for 12-step programs
- More frequent fellowship opportunities, informal opportunities – coffee bar, Sunday cafe
- Connections – time/space to feel connected – all ages *
- Spontaneous worship – what would that look like? Drums? Prayer and sharing time? *
- Family emphasis – building strong families *
- Sunday school space ***
- Does anyone miss me if I'm not there?
- Relationship with DSECC continues to be ambiguous, what do we want? *
- Youth participation in worship services
- More structures of how house churches are formed
- Cyber connections for youth
- Intentional connections among groups
- Sense of urgency – is everything fine at AMC? Pay attention to worrisome growth trends.
- Loyalty.
- Outreach to gain members – we're no longer drawing from those disaffected with Lancaster conference.
- AMC started out being very idealistic. Have we become too main stream?
- More house churches
- Green movement – what we do and its impact on the environment
- Exit interview with people who leave
- Volunteerism
- Follow through – we're good about addressing immediate needs, but how do we make long-term commitments?
- Passion for church *
- Emotion
- Intimacy, friendliness, belonging, warmth
- Diversity (racial and socioeconomic)
- Passing of the peace **
- An outreach church (as Pilgrims and CMCL were)
- Support group for people in transition

What hopes and dreams do you have for AMC in the next year? For the next five years?

- Place for connecting – programming for such ***
- Retreat areas – green cathedral, places of solitude **
- More fellowship opportunities, playing together more **
- More hospitality opportunities among members
- Many ideas related to space – fellowship and Sunday school *****
- Coffee house/bar ***
- Nontraditional places and ways to interact around theology
- Continue with mentoring in schools, Summit Quest, Homes of Hope, rental assistance etc. *
- Linking what we do as individuals and what we do collectively
- More intergenerational activities
- Ownership among young people
- Places where young families are more readily included
- Develop groups for those seeking discussions on peace
- Space to do what we want to do... creative solutions (multiple services?)
- We take ownership in making connections
- Creating strong connections with young people
- More moments in mission, globally and what people are doing within the walls of AMC
- Diversity
- To be overwhelmed by young families
- Ecumenical involvement in outreach
- More retreats
- Excitement about church
- Full-time youth pastor
- Social services staff person
- Each person will feel welcomed, accepted, wanted and helped
- Restart Uniform Sunday school series
- Needs of people over age 50 being met
- Needs of younger generations being met
- Let go of being a volunteer church, hire staff to develop programs that we want
 - Arts classes for children
 - Quiet times in a noisy city
 - Legal fellowship breakfast
 - Higher education fellowship
 - Healthcare fellowship
 - Debt reduction workshops
 - Conflict coaching
 - Purposeful prayer in a distracting world
 - Uprooting anger

**Compilation of notes from AMC Vision III Retreat
Saturday, January 12, 2008**

Session IV:

Four emerging themes

- Space ****
- Connectedness with each other ***
- Younger membership/young adults/young families ***
- Caring for each other
- Continue local and global connections/outreach/listening ***
- Inclusively welcome new people and maintain them (especially young families)
- Need a sense of what our center is before we move out, well-defined core
- What can we expect from/of church?
- A healing and empowering community – physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual
- Peace teaching – being a witness for peace and non-violence in our community *

**Compilation of notes from AMC Vision III Retreat
Saturday, January 12, 2008**

Session V:

Vision for AMC

- God, each other, world
- Nurturing the community among us, so we are equipped to reach out to neighbors near and far.
- Experience of the holy spirit together in worship service and sharing that spirit with those we live among.
- Akron Mennonite Church will be fully engaged in God's mission to make peace in a broken world as we are called, equipped and sent by the Holy Spirit to follow Christ in life.
- Engaged
- Healing and reconciliation
- Removed called, equipped and sent
- AMC is a place where we care for each other, provide opportunities to connect with each other and reach out to and include people of all ages and backgrounds through an Anabaptist Mennonite expression of faith.
- Akron Mennonite Church will follow Christ in life.
- The gifts and vision of AMC members will engage us in God's mission and witness to the world.
- Promote connections and caring between members, community and the world
- AMC – centered in Christ, led by the Holy Spirit, engaged in God's mission.
- Our Anabaptist community of peace and love in Akron will equip its members to radically follow Christ.
- Participate in God's mission of restoration within our congregation, across the street and around the world.
- AMC, a community of believers, will be fully engaged in God's mission as we are called, equipped and sent by the Holy Spirit to follow Christ in life as his disciples and as a sign of his kingdom in a broken world.
- Members of AMC will keep Christ at the center of their lives and share their vision with the world around them.
- Akron Mennonite Church will proclaim the word while serving the Lord and building the kingdom.
- AMC is a community church which exhibits peace and is fully engaged in following Christ daily in life.
- AMC will be a community church following Christ daily in life.
- Broken world- Christ centered – reach out
- Nurturing a faith building connectedness
- Core value
- In a broken world, we keep Christ and the church at the center of our lives – through an Anabaptist witness
- A community of healing and hope

- Keep Christ!
- Spiritual connectedness with God, each other and the community.
- AMC will be fully engaged in God's work of healing and peace in a broken world as we follow Christ in life.
- Use words like faith family vs. called, equipped, sent, gifts, vision
- Christ-centered
- Keep peace theme
- Keep something about outside world
- Include care for AMC
- Statement is all outward, yet our themes today are all inward.
- Connected, God's people, who are striving, the whole world, disciples, kingdom of God, we, us, community of believers
- Visual representation of vision statement could be effective
- Centered in Christ, led by the Holy Spirit, engaged in God's mission
- To be a beacon directing people to God's way of peace and love
- We follow Christ as the center of our lives. We love our neighbors as ourselves
- AMC: a Christ like presence in a broken world.