

Northeast (January 14, 2016)

Grandview Woodlands, Hastings Sunrise, Renfrew Collingwood

14 people from 14 out of 47 congregations/organizations (30% representation)

WHAT IS GOD DOING?

Mentally survey your neighbourhood, select what you sense is the single most hopeful sign of God's activity, and write down as much detail about that sign of hope as you can. The sign of hope may be something God is doing through your congregation or ministry, or through someone else's. The sign may even be something God is doing through a secular organization, local business or group of neighbours (God often works ahead of his people and outside the institutional church); and you think the Christian community should join in or do likewise.

- Neighbours are dropping in West Coast Christian Fellowship on Sundays; they are open and erect less barriers
- West Coast Christian School is experiencing health and seeing healing among families
- Youth With A Mission's prayer stations on Commercial Drive and Hastings Street offering prayer to people [during Car Free Days] initially met with some negative reaction. But as the years have passed, we are seeing more openness and a desire to be prayed for. We constantly prayed for a good Christian presence in the Commercial Drive and North Grandview Highway area; then last year Coastal Church began a campus at that location.
- neighbourhood has a sense of community/belonging
- Co:Here Foundation is a volunteer-led organization connected to Grandview Calvary Baptist Church, pursuing a 26-unit community housing project at 1st Avenue and Victoria Drive. It's creating an intentional community = 6 units will be for "lo-residents" – families committed to living longterm as support for the formerly homeless who will live in the other 20 units. They're pursuing a vision that goes beyond shelter. The project has found favour with the community, government, and donors; 80% of donors are from outside or non-Christian. Construction is anticipated to start this spring.
- Co:Here as a model of mutual transformation across social and economic boundaries
- Kinbrace Society – refugee claimant housing and support services
- The community/relationships built daily through the transitional housing of Kinbrace, where newly arrived refugee claimants from around the world – all of them in extremely vulnerable circumstances – discover home and hope in each others presence, surrounded by a permanent supportive community. Signs of hope: multicultural engagement, eating each others food, showing profound hospitality to each other in time of deep desperation.
- M.O.S.A.I.C., ISS Refugee Centre – welcome of the other/stranger/foreigner
- JustWork Economic Initiative – social enterprise for people with barriers to the workforce
- neighbourhood relational connections in the Parker Street area (101 on email mailing list), now working together to sponsor Syrian refugees. Integrated, embodied faith with daily practices.
- Vancouver Foundation's neighbourhood small grants foster lots of good work in local neighbourhoods.
- Grandview Woodland Food Network [Britannia Community Centre]
- showing multicultural community presence for some who identify [?]
- prayerful effort to reach residents of the new low cost housing next to our building
- youth are gathering together from different churches

WHAT ARE THE SPIRITUAL AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES?

Participants were asked to answer either 1a or 1b and then either 2a or 2b.

1a. What are the main spiritual challenges confronting your neighbourhood? Are these the same as or different from the ones confronting your parishioners or ministry participants?

- middle class families really enjoy life but ignore their spiritual life
- apathy toward spirituality; emptiness in people's lives; lack of purpose and direction
- many parents work so hard to raise their kids but don't know how to raise them in Christ
- identity: who are we as a neighbourhood; do we have an identity? This is often a struggle in our church and ministry life as well
- misconceptions about who God/Jesus is: caused by harms done in the past in the name of Christianity, i.e., residential schools, legalistic Christianity, emotionalism in faith
- drug and alcohol abuse causing brokenness in families, destruction in children's lives
- fatherless homes – lack of parenting skills
- neighbourhood: apathy, indifference, affluence; Buddhist temple on Kamloops & East Hastings
- congregation: affluence, commuting church lacks community contact; solution: adopt-a-block campaign
- neighbourhood: separated from the life of Christ; focussed only on this lifespan; lonely without committed strong relational life
- parishioners: faith to trust and follow Christ into daily victory and perspective; daily stress of life and expectations crowding out peace and joy
- "spiritual but not religious" → autonomous/individual faiths without community/grounding/support = individualism
- consumerism – trying to satisfy self needs for entertainment and experience, and not contributing to community/society
- suspicion of the church – poor past experience, confusion of JW's [Jehovah's Witnesses?], anti-establishment
- economic entitlement for those who have, leading to isolation and inhospitable environment: housing, space for the vulnerable, place for the sojourner, grace for children and noise, "mine is not ours" – degradation of community and neighbourhood
- neighbourhood: many religions; business, too rushed to consider God; apathy
- church: youth - try to get established; older – illness/health, service
- language confusion/communication; integration of culture – 60% of the congregation is ethnic!

1b. St Paul says "our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against ... the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph 6:12). What spiritual forces especially mark your neighbourhood? Which ones threaten your people?

- individualism/isolation/autonomy – with all the attendant social ills that accompany a breakdown in community and decreasing social bonds
- loneliness: by language, poverty, mental illness
- language/communication difficulties
- cultural miscommunication, misunderstanding; past conflicts
- social inequality – growing division between those who have and those who have not – home ownership is a dividing line
- addiction: drugs, sex, financial
- materialism

- religious tension/confusion – all sorts of spiritual forces from Buddhism, Sikhism, New Age, etc.
- religious confusion
- transportation
- mental illness, homelessness, addictions, independence, religiosity (Buddhism, Animism, etc.), poverty, materialism
- anarchy: rebellion (resent authority), false teachings/spirituality
- neighbourhood: syncretism spirituality – New Age; individualism; child trafficking, “kiddy walk” on Dundas
- ministry group: fear, compartmentalizing faith (vs. holistic, integrated into daily life), consumerism

2a. What is the most damaging social injustice impacting your neighbourhood? What are its main effects? In what ways, if any, does it affect people in your church or ministry?

- lack of affordable housing and resulting displacement (stemming in part from housing being treated merely as a commodity rather than as a basic need)
- lack of resources, care and community for those dealing with mental health issues
- widening economic gap separating the vast majority from provision: cost of housing, 2 persons working out of necessity instead of choice, the effect of this on children
- cost of housing/property: unaffordable, not rentable on the average salary (paying out 50% of income); most vulnerable are unable to participate in the neighbourhood; those who “buy in” work their asses off to make payments – no life, no neighbours = hollow city; only the independently wealthy or those with high incomes or double incomes can manage
- House prices/rent are too high. Young families suffer the most and need to move out.
- Housing costs and affordability have a large impact. This results in homelessness, crime, substance abuse, etc. Also, families move away once they start having children; this displaces the community
- exclusion from the economic system leads to un/under-employment, homelessness, mental illness, drug/alcohol abuse, property crime
- poverty and low income – and the stigma attached to this; takes too much work to get out of that (this doesn’t affect people in our church unless a need is voiced and then help comes in)
- The impact of the residential schools on First Nations people: destruction of the family structure which leads to brokenness and addictions, lack of education, and poverty. The welfare system perpetuates this brokenness for generations to come. Racism. Gang culture.

2b. What is your neighbourhood’s greatest wound? Similarly, thinking about your parishioners or ministry participants, what is their greatest wound as a group?

- One of the wounds seen on Commercial Drive is the churches’ reaction to the lesbian community (LGBTQ). This has now changed quite dramatically, but I still once in a while come across a bitter attitude toward Christians due to what happened in the past – suspicion of Christians.
- neighbourhood: the institution of the church – especially in the treatment of the LGBT community. Many (upwards of 1 in 4) in my neighbourhood are gay, and most couples have been together 20-30 years (so you can imagine the attitudes toward this community back then). Most other neighbours that aren’t gay stand in strong solidarity with them – and in their despise and distrust of the church (and its irrelevance for doing good in the community)

- ministry participants: past wounding from the church (unrelated to LGBT issues); grief of not being able to stay in the area because of housing costs
- loneliness, especially for singles and divorced families
- alienation experienced by First Nations folk, stemming from long history of residential schools and injustice
- growing suspicion and isolation of neighbours, especially towards the poor
- The greatest wound for our neighbours and parishioners is the cost of living and the drive for a high standard of living, which fragments and isolates us, because people are so busy with dual incomes and full schedules that family and community become last priority.
- need of reconciliation with the past: immigrants coming from violent nations
- understand suffering in life
- apathy
- affluence
- entitlement mentality
- Buddhist temple on Kamloops & East Hastings
- neighbourhood: changing community identity from a perceived homogeneity as “Little Italy” to mixed ethnic and economic groups; growing income disparity among residents
- ministry participants: homeless lack sense of community belonging, they are refugees in their own community
- nobody cares, self-centred
- lack of trust
- the lack of family connection; even among those born in Vancouver this seems to be a need: family loneliness! People feel separated <AS A CHURCH WE NEED TO HELP FILL THIS VOID>
- identity: who are we as a neighbourhood? This is often a struggle in our church and ministry life as well
- spiritual dryness
- sense of belonging as newcomers try to settle down
- Hastings Park – mistrust of civic process