

Appendix O - Focus Groups Summary

Stewardship Ministry Focus Groups, July 17 and 24, 2011

Summary of Findings

FHC is an integral part of a person's spiritual journey and exploration of faith. It is seen as a place of like-minded people where you can learn and interact; a place to let go and listen to others. Opportunities such as those found through adult education help to move the church-going experience away from being a routine toward a conduit of deeper meaning and spiritual understanding. FHC is perceived to be a comfortable place to raise children. There is appreciation for how children are taught, what they are taught and that they are included as participants.

Sources of information relied upon to learn about what happens at FHC include the bulletin, the website, and the Tower but nearly all participants use e-mail from the church as their main resource to stay informed (appreciation for the new format, template easy to follow). Another common source of information is one relied upon those who are deeply involved in the church – hearing from others on session and in ministry meetings and chatting with others at church.

Members respond to appeals for financial support that address real needs whether they are capital needs or in support of social activism. Communication and transparency about the budget (how funds are being used) is essential in stewarding support for the church. Having budget challenges presented honestly and openly in an understandable way will motivate more giving. It is very important to remember the spiritual aspect of giving and to be reminded of them.

More should be done to educate supporters of FHC about different ways to make a financial contribution. There is interest in knowing about the different ways to donate (gifts of stock, online giving, etc.) and about options for targeted giving. Knowing specific targets for giving would increase likelihood of giving above base pledge throughout the year when someone's capacity is there. There is a need to help facilitate giving from those who do not attend church often. Feedback throughout the year to supporters of FHC will help to close the gap between visions of where we want to be versus reality of where we are.

Though motivations for giving may change over the course of one's life, financial support is given out of the feeling of a "need to give". They believe giving helps to put their own abundance in perspective ("it's not my money") and is grounding for them. It is an important way of giving some balance in their life as they compare their needs with the needs of others. They give because they value what FHC does in the community even though they may not take

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part in it (e.g. IHN). For some, giving money to FHC is easier than giving elsewhere as they feel confident the funds are going to where there are real needs and the money will be used wisely.

Those who attend FHC enjoy others who go there as well. People feel invited and nurtured there and want to give back to a place that treats them this way. They like the “small church feel.” Having so many ways to be involved naturally develops a sense of commitment to FHC. They find the “sacrifice” of giving create a sense of greater abundance for all. It is often done out of gratitude and is not a struggle (e.g. “giving gives us so much back”). Most feel obliged to support “the great staff we have who need to be compensated and fulfilled in order to continue their ministry to us.” They do not resent being asked to give and some feel they can do more.