

McCLURE UNITED CHURCH VISIONING WORKSHOP REPORT



INTRODUCTION

Over and over again we hear a desire in our congregation to build a multigenerational church. But how do we accomplish this? A logical first step is to gain an understanding of the hopes and dreams of each generation that calls McClure their home.

We started by dividing the congregation into five age groupings: Generation Z (10–19), Millennials (20–39), Generation X (40–54), Baby Boomers (55–74) and the Silent Generation (75+). Through a series of workshops, a sample of participants from each group voiced their ideas on “What We Are” and “What We Could Be”.

The information collected in this report will help give values-based direction to our decision-makers as we move into the future. It is important to remember that while this information is anecdotal, it will still provide a strong foundation as we look towards more formal research in the future.



METHOD

From November to January, we held a series of five Visioning Workshops—one for each age grouping. Special attention was made to invite participants that represented the circles within our church: curious, comfortable and committed. We developed a set of questions that would remain consistent for each workshop while discussion was led by participants and guided by a facilitator. Responses were recorded by a volunteer note-taker at each session.

We put an emphasis on introducing play—not just for younger generations, but to instill creativity, curiosity and joy into our work. Icebreakers, one-word answers, sticker voting, writing exercises and group discussions were all part of our arsenal.

We also placed significance on assuring participants that these workshops were a safe place to share how they really feel. Every answer would be a correct answer. Our focus was never on our shortcomings but rather collecting opinions, attitudes and ideas on what could be possible.

QUESTIONS

Vision/Mission

- How would you describe McClure United Church?
- Write a description of your ideal church community.

Worship

- If a church service could only last 5 minutes—what would you include?
- What does a church need to do to cause a lineup outside of their front doors every Sunday?

Outreach

- Write down a cause that you are passionate about.
- What could a church community do to help this cause?



THEMES

Identity

- Among all age groups, participants used positive words like welcoming, supportive, comfortable, safe, familiar and family to describe McClure.
- Participants in all age groups described McClure using negative words like struggling, stumped, lagging behind, aging, rigid, inert and declining.
- Generation Z and Millennials did not see themselves in McClure. They used descriptors like: seniors, white hair, older, old man Captain America, Carl (from Disney's Up), Stan Lee and grandparents.
- Participants likened McClure to a vehicle that was old, roomy, dated and needed some work.
- No one used fish to describe McClure even though it is a prominent symbol in our logo and new stained glass window. The most universal animals were: dog, cat and bear.

THEMES

Music

- Participants across all age groups identified music as important to both worship and their ideal church communities.
- All age groups would like to see different musical genres and songs represented.
- Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation were the most likely to appreciate traditional hymns.

Youth

- Similar to what we were hearing before the beginning of these workshops, there is a desire in all age groups to create a multigenerational church.
- Participants shone a definite spotlight on the Generation Z age group.
- Generation Z expressed a desire to become more involved at McClure—though worship or small group activities.



THEMES

Worship

- Worship speaks to each participant in different ways.
- The top three positive aspects of worship are: 1) music/song, 2) prayer, 3) strong, thought-provoking message.
- Announcements, specifically those regarding budget deficit news, were generally viewed as negative.

Outreach

- There is a sense of pride in participants with McClure's history of outreach.
- Much like worship, participants have a variety of individual tastes regarding causes.
- The most popular causes for all age groups were: poverty, mental health/addiction services and the environment.
- Animals and the Saskatoon SPCA were popular choices among Generation Z and Millennials.

THEMES

Communication

- Speaking with participants from many different age groups shows how challenging everyone's communication needs can be.
- Participants in the Generation Z and Millennial age groups emphasized the need to leverage technology and social media at our church.
- A few participants in the Generation X age group preferred email communication instead of a face-to-face setting (too busy to attend or not comfortable).

Creating Excitement

- All age groups identified hosting a big event as an opportunity to create more interest in McClure.
- Generation Z and Millennial age groups specifically zeroed in on using social media and celebrity guests as ways to build interest.
- Food and working on big community projects were also favourite answers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Encouraging Tomorrow's Leaders

There is no greater investment in the future of our church than raising tomorrow's leaders. We need to give youth and young adults a proper seat at the table. Whether on formal committees or informal small groups, we need to make sure mentorship, guidance and encouragement are available for this crucial segment of our congregation.

Elevating Music Ministry

Universally, across all age groups, music was identified as an integral part of the church experience. In addition to our already strong music ministry team, we should seek out and encourage others to share their gift of musical talent with the congregation. We need to put resources towards creating and cultivating a diverse musical culture at McClure.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Call to Action

An easy definition of church growth is simply increasing the amount of people attending Sunday worship. However, anyone who has served a church can tell you that volunteers are the lifeblood of the church. We need to excite and inspire our fellow parishioners into action—move past Facebook likes into volunteer signups. We also need to recognize and remove barriers that may be preventing this action.

Big Connections, Small Groups

Attending worship takes one hour out of every week. What are we doing to build community the remaining hours of the week? There are countless opportunities for interest and faith-based groups—we just need to ignite the spark in prospective leaders. To use a well-known quote: “if you build it, they will come.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

Visual Makeover

A participant brought up the fact that churches are special because there aren't a lot of places where every age group is represented in a community. The problem is that our younger generations, while active participants, don't see themselves in their church community. Moving past a simple logo update, we need to concentrate on updating our physical spaces and communications with a modern flair.

Strong Vision

As McClure works through the process of renewal it is integral that we determine a strong vision for our church. This vision should light a fire in the belly of our church members and attract others to follow. Our very name, "McClure", implies a ministry built on outreach and service. Is a focus on our outreach ministry roots the answer we are looking for?



RECOMMENDATIONS

Reimagining Announcements

We can all agree that announcements during worship can be an effective way to communicate the life and work of the church. But are we capturing the attention of our captive audience? If we spent a little more time crafting engaging stories and developing stronger calls to action, we could turn a weakness into a strength.

Central Hub

Can growth truly come from doing less? Sometimes we can confuse our congregation with chaotic communications. Check the bulletin! Call the church! Visit the lobby! We need a way to consolidate every connection point into a single destination—not just for the administration time savings but for clear calls to action that lead to better engagement.