

Listening Posts Summary – June 2019

HAC engaged in Listening Posts for a 10 week period of time. Gathering of small groups in homes and other local locations, like restaurants, parks, and meeting room in the community took place to intentionally seek God together and listen to each other. Participants were invited to spiritually prepare before entering the gathering, and share what they have been observing and hearing from God. The meetings were prefaced with the assumption of; having the best of HAC in mind and a desire to join in where the Spirit is at work.

Meetings have generally began with some kind of introductions, my own formative experience of the listening posture, and listening to God based decision making. I tie in my enduring hope for the local church, and the reality of God's Spirit alive, at work, and speaking today.

The basic process of the meeting has been to walk thru a condensed spiritual listening preparation, adjusted according to the group and location, and then centering the discussion around these questions:

1. Considering our current reality, what are some things we need to address at HAC moving forward?
2. As you have listened to God, what deep "heart desires" have been awakened in you? How might they be expressed within our church and beyond with those you work with, family members, or in other venues?
3. As you look at the trends of our society and context in which we live (personal situations, church environment, community context, critical issues the world is facing), where do you envision Heritage Alliance Church playing a part in what God is doing--in the next 5 years, and in the next 10 years.

Overall, people have been very engaging, each grouping had uniqueness, and healthy interaction with each other. I have been assuming that the attendees have the best interests of HAC in mind, and communicate that to each gathering.

As people have gauged the level of openness and safety in the conversation, transparency has also increased during the meetings. There have been sacred moments, passionate expressions and thoughtful interactions. These are good people who want to move forward and address our challenges going forward

Our forward planning group has spent a couple meetings discussing the emerging trends and common threads from the input we have received. Future meetings will involve focussing our discussion around potential outcomes and next steps, communicating the listenings, and reporting.

Here are some of my observations, and summaries of emerging trends and common themes;

- there is an expressed high value of Scripture and Bible based in teaching and worship
 - a common articulation of Heritage is at a crossroads, intersection, the cusp of something(?),
 - people are wondering & looking for what's next
 - coupled with anticipation is a lack of clarity, an abiding sense of uncertainty
 - there were oft expressions of the need for vision, and that vision has diminished
- What is the vision? Does the vision fit with Heritage now?
- there are voiced observations of heaviness, weariness, tiredness
 - commonly I hear questioning trust levels between each other and with leadership
 - people feel there is a residing vein of judgementalism

-and related to the above, wondering why unhealthy behaviour that has been allowed to continue
-this lead to expressions & strong desire for Heritage to be a church “where I am not judged”

- one of the summary statements that sums up our current reality was expressed this way: “Heritage was current at a time, we’ve stayed, and life and culture/community have moved on”

Concerns people are observing:

There is a sense of loss corporately

We are doing many things and activities primarily out of obligation

How do we talk to each other? – was often asked

There is a desire to have healthy conversations

Where did we fail? – was a common response

How do we translate these desires at Heritage? – was another common question

How can we be engaged around us?

We heard an observed Heritage characteristic = in the past Heritage was “intergenerational”, there is a longing/desire for Heritage to be intergenerational in the future, but Heritage is not described currently as intergenerational

What is God bringing to the surface & how do you envision Heritage future:

Mentoring and coaching is surfacing & more highly desired for spiritual growth and formation

Desire for meeting God on a personal level

Need for redefining outreach and engagement

Church health and purpose as a priority for this season

Where family is central, it’s safe, and people are loved & valued

Desire an atmosphere of encouragement, building up each other

Family for those with no family

Serving our community

Desire for a worshipping community

Authentic community & relationships

Awakening sense of helping each other work thru our brokenness

Desire for partnering in community ministries

We have lots going for us, we are blessed

Desire to have eyes for those around us

Application

What do I see as possible outcomes?(These are my speculations)

-we're doing the ground work, the necessary work that leads to vision honing & reimagining
-each meeting, each interaction and event we engage in, can be marked by healthy behaviour, purpose – and then the next one, and the next one, and the next one...health breeds health

-questions: what is the vision for HAC that we will plan towards?

Who will be the crafter of that vision? Staff, BOE, congregation?

Will the BOE champion the vision, will the lead pastor or staff team or the congregation?

How will we form and articulate that vision?

Without a vision/direction/next mountain it is difficult to plan towards an undefined future

I could envision each ministry team meet together to make application of these findings and plan for next years ministry with these things in mind

*June 12th – the HAC Staff will meet together to plan for next years ministry plans

*June 15th the Board of Elders will be meeting for a day together to pursue: Vision Renewal and Action Steps

We have a good outline of work to do and Godly pursuits to follow. As we continue to discern God's call on Heritage at this time, we are all invited to pursue healthy church and community life, and continue listening to God and each other.

Let's reimagine our potential... ¹⁰For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.(Ephesians 2)