

An External Focus—Who do people say that we are?

Written by Steve Spayer, Council Chair



I have been reading the Gospel of Matthew lately as part of my daily devotion. Chapter 16 verse 13 describes Peter's Confession of Christ. You may recall in this verse Jesus asks Peter "...Who do people say the Son of Man is? He goes on to ask..." But what about you? Who do you say I am...? I find it interesting how I can read a familiar passage at different times and get different insights influenced by current events in my life. My recent read of this passage immediately made me think of our church. Who do people say the Our Saviour's community is? By what are we known? Who do you say the Our Saviour's community is? By what would you like us to be known?

The work of Council has had an internal focus anchored by information we received from the CAT survey, enhanced by insights gained through the World Cafes and translated through action plans to form the strategic plan. While we are making progress on each component of the strategic plan (Hospitality / preparing Leaders and Disciples / enhancing Worship / fostering Faith and Community / improving operations), we recognize the most visible area has been changes in operations. Our operational focus has isolated opportunities for change that improve performance, generate cost savings, and thereby create "capacity" for us to invest in God's work. This work has been critical to create a firm foundation from which we can grow our ministries and missions. Significant progress has been made to position us to increase our impact in the community. We are excited by your response to the stewardship appeal, the new members we have added to staff, and by the interest our Search Committee is seeing for the Director of Worship and Arts position.

Our work on the strategic plan is ... a process. Key steps for our teams include (1) learning from previous attempts (as a community in existence for over 60 years, we have tried many things), (2) identifying risk elements (things that might cause something to fail), and (3) addressing those factors in our plans. Central to all is the need to prepare leaders and disciples as this component touches hospitality (inviting someone to walk with us), enhancing worship (training new volunteers / encouraging existing volunteers to grow into new roles), and fostering faith (preparing more small group leaders, teachers, and youth mentors). We have identified a tool we want to implement to help identify your spiritual gifts. Our desire is to build some infrastructure around this tool in advance of its launch to (1) help you interpret the survey on your own, (2) have a team available (if desired) to assist you in interpreting survey results and the potential application to your life, and (3) to align outcomes with service opportunities if your desire is to apply your gifts to advance the work of your church. Similarly, we will be meeting with current ministry leaders to identify needs for new volunteers, requisite training, and advancement opportunities. More to come!

Our focus in Council is shifting from internal to external as we reflect on who God is calling us to be as a faith community. Who do people say the Our Saviour's community is? Who do **you** say the Our Saviour's community is? Consider the "sending statement" currently in use at the Celebration campus: **Gracious God, your church is composed of people like us. We help make it what it is. It will be friendly** when we are friendly. **Its chairs will be filled** when we help fill them. **It will do great work** when we work together. **It will give to worthy causes** when we are generous givers. **It will be a church where people grow in faith and serve you** when we are open to growth and service **Lord, with your help**, we shall dedicate ourselves to being the church you have in mind.

So let us go out to *Know Jesus...AND MAKE JESUS KNOWN...* AMEN!