

November 26, 2008

TO: Emmanuelites Near and Far:

RE: Invitation for “Provocative Proposals” for a positive future building on EMMANUEL AT OUR BEST & OUR HOPES FOR THE FUTURE.

FROM: Don Wheeler, for the Long Range Planning Committee

In these brief pages below you will find an enthusiastic expression of Emmanuel’s “positive core” --- **EMMANUEL AT OUR BEST & OUR HOPES AND PRAYERS FOR THE FUTURE!** These are not just words on a page, but they represent the vital, life-giving stories of fellow Emmanuelites. These were gathered from 57 Appreciative Conversations and follow-up discussions conducted by the Long Range Planning Committee from August-November, 2008.

YOU ARE INVITED TO OFFER “PROVOCATIVE PROPOSALS” Based on these life-giving stories of Emmanuel’s “positive core”, we invite your ideas – large and small- for how to take Emmanuel to a new level of effectiveness in carrying out our mission. One of the most persistent hopes and prayers for the future of Emmanuel is: GROWING IN FAITH, COMMUNITY AND OUTREACH---people on a faith journey, united in vibrant community, reaching out locally and globally. We would appreciate your ideas on how we can grow!

We use the words “provocative proposals” to indicate that you are free to challenge the way things are done now. Please write a brief description of your idea for a program or ministry, why you think it would be helpful and how you think it might be implemented, ie: resources, people etc. Please submit your ideas as early as possible for careful consideration by the committee to drdwheeler@optonline.net or to the church office.

From your ideas, the Long Range Planning Committee will present a set of recommendations for action to the Congregational Meeting scheduled for February 8. Please plan to be there!

Blessings and Peace! Don Wheeler -for the Long Range Planning Committee: June Boswick, Dave Dallon, Pastor Linda Hart-Green, Wally Krzeminski, Bryant Kuo, Janet Poinsette and advisors Sharon Brockway, Marilyn Clark, Annette Young and Pastor Judy Wheeler

EBC AT OUR BEST AND OUR HOPES AND PRAYERS FOR THE FUTURE FROM APPRECIATIVE CONVERSATIONS August 15 – October 29, 2008

- **What is Emmanuel Baptist Church AT OUR BEST:**

MEET CHALLENGES

1. **We rise to the occasion, come together and take risks to meet challenges**
 - “We are at our best when we set a goal and all come together to reach it. It feels like your family gathering around to help. This happens weekly at Emmanuel”
 - Supported sheltering the homeless
 - Helped start the MLK Celebration and change discriminatory real estate practices in Ridgewood
 - Pledge drive for renovations, campaigns for elevator, handicap bathroom
 - Carefully and fairly resolved conflicts in the church

- Experience the church coming together in a project or special celebration like our 115th anniversary – connecting with pastors and members from the past. Great sense of togetherness

2. EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND TRUST

- **Effective pastoral and lay leadership with a high level of mutual trust**
- “There is no place like Emmanuel! It is friendly, welcoming, accepting, open and has a great Pastor. Linda does a great job.”
- Our lay leadership at this time is very impressive, and very hands-on. Great teamwork. The trust, the faith, warmth, honesty and humaneness—phony would be the last word I would use
- Pastor’s caring and leadership are key in all of this; relationships with Pastor very important
- Pastor’s leadership with local clergy and the community; MLK Day

RICH SPIRITUAL LIFE

3. Rich spiritual experiences

- Sermons are most important for the development of spiritual life, music, Christmas, Easter
- Bible study, retreats, Prayer Shawl Ministry, Prayer Group

STEWARDSHIP OF FINANCES AND FACILITIES

4. Modernizing, updating and maintaining our facilities, our procedures, our records; beautifying facilities

- Getting our by-laws, finances in order many years ago and our office computerized
- Tackling facilities projects: sealing & protecting stained glass windows, glass doors, 325 E. Ridgewood Ave., Heritage Hall, Peace Lounge, air conditioning, mold removal, elevator, handicapped bathroom, compact fluorescents, church school like new!

CLOSE, CARING, INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

5. Supportive, caring community that can be relied on. “EBC is like my family...”, “my second home”, “my rock”, “It’s wonderful to have everyone praying for you!”

Hospitable and friendly—not pompous

- Received help, support in time of special need
- We stay in touch with each other in a variety of different ways and different settings: socially, church business, service activities and in fellowship events
- Emmanuel openly accepts and encourages people with special needs

6. Friendships and pulling together as a community

- “I have so many good friendships in this church. It is like one big family.”
- Long sustained, personal friendships where we can share openly and deeply, where we work together, have fun, where differences of opinion & background do not divide – often individual people are named

7. Welcoming of Newcomers

- “We are very welcoming. This is a special thing about Emmanuel”
- Got invited to lunch or to a home; “Felt like I could fit in”
- Network—people helped to connect with others in the church and community
- Invitation to coffee hour or a meal at the church with time to get acquainted

8. Multicultural

- Celebrate diversity (spiritual, racial, cultural, generational, gender)
- Accept people for who they are and from different backgrounds
- Reach out to understand other faith communities

OPEN ATMOSPHERE TO SEEK KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM, TRUTH

9. Open discussion of social and political issues

- Intellectual stimulation, broad scope of interests, interest in society
- There was openness so we could debate, share our deepest thoughts

10. Non-judgmental toward others

- Congregation broad-minded, non-judgmental, accepting of differences of opinion
- Felt accepted, included, not judged, previous religious background not an issue

11. ACTIVE, HIGH LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION

- Active participation in church groups and activities
- Sharing and support happens around our activities and tasks. These are “velcro points” for deeper involvement and commitment
- People generously offer many talents and abilities
- Boards and Committees; Men’s Fellowship , Women of Emmanuel, Choir, Bell Choir, Bible Study
- Book Group : we share a lot and bond with each other; Bridge Group

12. Intergenerational and family activities

- Church suppers, pot-lucks, Octoberfest, Italian Festival, Family Night, Fun Night, Church Picnics
- Vacation Bible School

OUTREACH TO OTHERS

13. Responding to needs of the community

- Homeless Shelter Program, Food Bank, SHARE meals for the elderly, Sunday night suppers with AIDS caregivers for others less fortunate than ourselves, food drive
- Outreach to the Hispanic community
- Knocked on doors up and down Hope Street inviting people to church. People did not come but we tried

14. Responsive to people in need nearby and globally, emphasis on social justice

- Mission giving, CROP WALK
- Mission outreach to Rwanda , New Orleans

*****What are our hopes and prayers for the future?**

1. Growth in every way: numbers, faith, sense of community, outreach in the community & world

- Increase the size of the congregation with broader generational participation
- Develop a ministry to youth, young adults and young families
- Continue to build up the Sunday School
- Enlist more volunteers in the work and activities of the church--- strong, broad-based participation
- Continue to be supportive of our current members while reaching out to the wider community

2. Model inclusiveness and diversity for the community. Multicultural, racial, ethnic, age, different abilities

- Include people from different cultures and the younger generation in leadership positions
3. **Expand the emphasis on spirituality or spiritual side of church life and mission. Help members find the resources to deepen their faith and to live faithfully.**
 - Find ways to transform people so they can transform the culture around them
 - Strong teaching of the Bible and Jesus
 4. **Continue special family and fellowship opportunities, dinners, exciting vibrant activities**
 5. **Become more successful in communicating who we are; need increased public visibility**
 6. **Continue partnering with other churches. Rwanda and New Orleans, sending bicycles, computers**
 7. **Facilities and finances**
 - Strengthen our financial base
 - Continue capital improvement and maintenance projects that improve our facilities
 8. **Talk openly about problems and issues people have with the church. Don't be afraid to measure how we are doing and discuss it**
 9. **Be hopeful for growth and persevere**
 - Persevere. Be hopeful about the future and move toward it creatively. Recognize our joys and successes
 - "Look toward a strong revival where we can see God working in and through Emmanuel. I believe it will come."

APPRECIATIVE CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUNGER ADULTS, 30s – 40s 10/15/08

****What is EBC at its BEST for us younger adults?**

1. Same responses as the congregation overall---BUT with an emphasis on three things
 - EBC is very supportive – it's wonderful to have a group of people on your side praying for you. "Everyone really means it when they say, 'How are you'."
 - The church is steady and sure, a rock, my grounding
 - Church people seem to like our children. It's very special to have the church dedicate them

****What are the hopes and prayers of younger adults for Emmanuel?**

1. We need to provide options for participation for people who are **"time starved."** Not everyone can do more than show up. Some things that would help are:
 - Single, **one-time events** are good like the movie night—great

- No commitment to activities that stretch over a long time period- **short term commitments** only
2. Have a **variety** of different kinds of events—not always the same thing so different people can find **something to connect to**
 - One of the best ways for our non-Emmanuel spouses to get involved is through some project where they can **contribute time or a skill without feeling they have to join Emmanuel as members**
 - We do like the service and study activities of the church but it works best for us when there are **little circumscribed projects**. Even then sometimes when the time comes we can't participate even when we thought we could.
 - How about a big, first-class, **interfaith marriage workshop**
 - Do some worship or other activities **other than Sundays**, but road-test them to see if they will work
 3. **People NOT in our age group need to plan and execute the activity**. We don't have time. Plan it for us and we'll try to come. We'll help while we're there, but it's hard to commit beforehand.
 4. Find **new ways to connect and make sense to younger people** so they will find something that really speaks to them in our church
 5. Hope that Emmanuel will **continue on into the future**
 6. Hope that our church will be **open to making the changes** as needed
 7. Hope that we will have a **staff person to support young people's activity**
 8. Have events **across the generations**

Quotes:

"Kyle called EBC Bryant's house, then he called it Linda's house. He's working up to calling it God's house!"

"Our children have a few dozen grandparents here at EBC."