

First Congregational Church of Granby, Connecticut

April 26, 2015 Congregational Meeting

What action ministries are going well?

Programs are roughly organized by the number of positive comments. Specific comments -- both positive and negative -- about a ministry are also included.

Youth program. G-Crew, the one-room Sunday School concept, and dedicated spaces for each of these groups received high marks. Rebecca was uniformly praised for her energy, insight and ability to put the kids front and center. The mission trips were also applauded. Some tables suggested more opportunities for adults to be included in mission trips; it was unclear whether the commenters were referring to inclusion in the youth mission trips, or special trips for adults.

Sunday breakfast/lunch. Several tables commented how much this ministry shows the caring nature of this congregation. The willingness of people to deliver meals to absent members was also noted.

Connections. Members noted that the group provides a variety of opportunities for members to connect socially, and also reaches the greater community as well.

Worship. Members agreed that worship is welcoming, but suggested the following fine tuning: eliminating the downtime between readers, music, etc; limiting the description details of joys and concerns; having people pass notes on joys/concerns to the end of each aisle; have a dress code for Deacons.

Music. The choir, bell choir and worship music in general were applauded. There were a few comments about the complexity of some pieces, but also an observation that much of the music was so moving that the congregation actually applauded.

Facilities. Members noted the great improvement in Church facilities, as well as timely maintenance. They also praised the generosity of members in supporting capital improvements.

Passing of the peace during worship. Members commented that it is a powerful, non-threatening way to connect with others. It was suggested that there may be a way to build on this practice without making it so routine that it's no longer special.

Other Action Ministries that are viewed as working well include:

- Stephen Ministry.
- Winter book discussion groups.
- Community Garden.
- Transportation Action Program.
- Kids in Community.

- Memorial Garden.
- Simply Smiles.
- Westfield Soup Kitchen.
- The synergy between Women’s Fellowship and the Care Community was noted.

A few comments were made on places that need improvement.

- Women’s Spirituality raised some questions. Some tables were unsure of its reception, and others commented that the challenge is getting different generations together and meeting different time demands.
- Transition process has gone well but, in new structure, we need to be careful to avoid bureaucracy, e.g. too many forms.
- A few tables commented that adult education is not as vibrant as it was in previous years.

How can we create more on-ramps?

The most recurring theme was that we must develop a more **effective communications program**, internally and with the general public. Some suggestions included:

- sharing stories from the Program Ministries.
- using social media (while considering safe church policies).
- improving the website.
- improving the First Edition.
- having a paid publicity person.
- Having a monthly presence in *The Granby Drummer*.
- Sending email blasts to area churches.
- Putting posters in Starbucks.

Be more direct in presenting our message. Don’t rely simply on “open and affirming” as a description, but give real-life examples of our inclusivity.

Share *God sightings* in our internal – and perhaps external – communications.

Consider an alternative worship service. A Sunday evening contemporary service as well as a 6 pm Saturday service were mentioned.

Create activities for men.

Create a “welcome wagon” project to contact new residents in town.

Have church picnics on the front lawn. It’s another social opportunity, and it also promotes our message with passersby.

Have more intergenerational activities. Consider intergenerational programs focused on technology. It was suggested that we create a program to match seniors who need tech help/education with youth who are interested.

Discuss Ginny's sermons after worship.

Eliminate the use of acronyms without explanation, e.g. TAP, KIC, Bike & Build. It sends a bad message – a message of exclusivity – to visitors and even members who may not be highly engaged.

Create a special group for families with children 2 to 7 years old.

Invite more community groups to use church facilities, with the vision of making the church the hub of the community once again.

Have discussions on timely topics.

Send surveys to members who have left.

Invite church members to youth events.