

COMMUNITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Rochester, MN

BLUE SKY CONVERSATIONS

In September of 2018, CPC's Transitional Pastor, Susan Li, led the congregation in a series of gatherings to discuss our thoughts and feelings about CPC. We discussed how people defined CPC's identity as a Christian church and how that shaped our values and self-understanding. We also had a conversation about CPC's mission statement and talked about what it meant to us to be "open-hearted" and "open-minded" and how those values manifested themselves in the life of the church and its congregants.

The collective thoughts of the participants were recorded on a whiteboard during the course of the conversations. Pastor Susan took photos of the whiteboards to preserve a record of what was said. She has graciously shared those photos with us. The notes captured provide us with a starting point for our conversations two and one-half years later.

Some notes about these conversations. Pastor Jan mentioned that above the clouds, the sky is always blue. That is where we are coming from. Let's think and dream together about who we are and what we can do and how we envision God working through us. It doesn't have to be today, but it is what we strive to be and do. Please note that these conversations are for anyone with a connection to CPC. You don't have to be a member to participate.

As we begin, let's think about the major events of the past year:

- The COVID pandemic
- The death of George Floyd
- The election and the events that have followed

How are these events influencing our thoughts and feelings about our Christian identity and our mission as a church today and in the future?

TOPIC 1: OUR CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

- What are the elements of Christian identity?
 - Acknowledged the 2018 notes that Christ is central to our ID as Christians and as a Christian church
 - Noted that CPC is involved in a variety of outreach activities now
 - Noted that CPC should look for additional opportunities to meet needs in the community

- **How does our Christian identity shape our values and self-understanding?**
 - Addressing food insecurity was lifted up as a primary concern; providing community garden space was one means of doing this.
 - It was suggested that CPC could forge a closer relationship with the Village Garden organization which currently uses the garden space we provide in front of the church...our “front yard.”
 - We don’t have extra space to offer
 - We can engage in some mutually beneficial social activities which could be hosted in CPC’s space.

- **What does it mean to say we are a Christian church?**
 - In addition to the centrality of Christ and his teachings, we noted that outreach to others is a vital component of being a Christian church. We must act on our faith and help others.

TOPIC 2: OUR MISSION AS A CHURCH

CPC’s Mission Statement: *“To be an open-hearted, open-minded Christian community, sharing a ministry of faith, hope and love.”*

- **Open-hearted**
 - **What does it mean to be open-hearted?**
 - Again we acknowledged the validity of the responses from 2018
 - The opinion was expressed (with general acceptance) that we must be involved in the social justice movement that has gained momentum since the death of George Floyd.
 - The call was lifted up to name and identify systemic racism

 - **How do we demonstrate that value as a church today?**
 - CPC is currently a Matthew 25-designated church
 - CPC is involved in the Presbytery’s Anti-Racism Spiritual Pilgrimage, September, 2020 – May, 2021. Something similar will be offered again next year

 - **What more would we like to be and do in the future to demonstrate our open-heartedness?**
 - Sponsor outside speakers of stature on racial injustice as well as other topics of importance to the community
 - Develop a relationship with a minority congregation.