NOTES FROM GROUP DISCUSSIONS – **RESULTS FROM FOCUS GROUPS**

*What surprised you?*

* surprised that only one person stated indigenous and LGBTQ2+ issues were important
* that “English church” was usually the default for non-Catholic
* that UCC needs to be more proactive vis a vis the press in Quebec, that the Catholic church is dominating the religious print media
* that we need to amplify the French language ministries
* Difference between views of multi-generational groups and newcomers
* Congruence of opinion of participants
* Lack of awareness of UCC
* Is 27 people enough to generalize results?
* Nothing came as a surprise!
* Mostly people weren’t surprised in this group. It confirmed for one why so many attempts to attract new people from this demographic were largely unsuccessful.
* It is surprising the extent to which multigenerational Quebecers have near zero awareness of anything besides Catholic Church - but it shouldn’t be surprising given linguistic and cultural barrier/history…..
* One church already has ministry with food insecurity that attracts interest/support from growing % of Francophone neighbours in that area.
* None were surprised by what they heard. There was a concern about the language used with this particular demographic, ex “dogma. It is understandable that there is a rejection of religion/church as this is taught at school, its in the news, its in the arts, movies, music, media and in our laws. ‘L’église ni arrange ni dérange’, les gens sont plus concernés avec la vie quotidienne. Intéressant que `food security’ est plus haut que la justice sociale ou le climat pour cette démographic.
* For the most part, no surprises. One participant did wonder how an institution that has been around since 1925 can be so unknown. But most participants that there is little knowledge of the church in general, and the United Church in particular, among younger francophones.

*How does this influence the way you would invite people without a church background into your community?*

* what do we invite them to in our ministries if it’s not “church”
* what are new comers looking for in a church
* tap into the curiosity of who we are with lapsed Catholics who are showing a spiritual hunger
* understanding why the French press seems to ignore ecumenical projects and defaults to only talking about the Catholic input (joint refugee sponsorship between UC and Catholic congregations only mentioned Catholic help when covering it in local paper in townships)
* we have to promote and position our French immigrant ministers
* Our church needs to do more on how to invite people in Communities of Faith.
* Extend invitation to people living close to our churches
* We can use innovative ways of invitation even if we are reluctant in using the word evangelism. For example, send Christmas Cards to our neighbours.
* Let people know that we are really interested and are doing social justice issues
* Be there for those searching.
* Go back to the basics-why we are church? Answers: Jesus offers life
* Challenges: Lack of resource for people to lead events that may attract people. For example, resources to support social justice events and volunteers.
* Language to invite has to be contextual and speak to the realities of today. Our message has to include our actions not just words. So if we understand correctly the results of the sondage, we have to feed people!
* Personal invitation – word of mouth
* Events held in the church- getting people into the building for events such as community dinner, fall fair, thrift shop, etc.
* One participant noted that Sunday morning worship is now a lost cause.

**Other thoughts**

Much of our conversation was regarding a barrier not mentioned in the research - language.

The question is raised “do we really want to attract new people (who will require us to change)?”

We’re willing to be welcoming as long as it doesn’t impinge on who COF has been / wants to hang on to……….

Double standard for bilingual application of welcome in worship - all words need to be understood in English / but not the same for those in French……..

Some communities feel the “circle the wagons” mentality as only place to be comfortable speaking English………

One community has a francophone worshipping community (and some Mandarin too!) but that does not mean the Anglophone majority congregation is being transformed.

Hope for ministries like food insecurity, antiracism, neurodiversity as things we can do more and will find resonance in wider community.

One church offers a VBS that is bilingual that is attracting and including new kids/families in the extended church community including francophone families (both multigenerational and newcomers) even if not attending church per se.

If our anglophone communities don’t really want to change or aren’t capable of changing (for good reasons as well as questionable ones) - would an approach be to put resources into existing francophone communities or new ones (Eglise Sainte-Claire) that will focus on outreach to the unchurched French speaking communities (multigenerational and newcomer?). Maybe an outreach church in a storefront - emphasizing messages to engage multigenerationals or newcomers (or both?) with what the research shows would or does resonate?

Would current anglophone COFS “host” francophone outreach communities supported by Region as transformational for future/God’s glory?

How do we strengthen COFS welcome to newcomers (which a number of our communities already benefit from) (eg: our transformation as multiracial/ethnic communities), which research tells us are the “low hanging fruit” (awful terminology for our purposes - lol)

Would it not be valuable outreach if our buildings would be open increasingly to rental for (secular) community needs/purposes? Or church community responding to hunger/poverty/antiracism in inclusive ways - helping people - as many churches already do - without strings attached………

A challenge is how to create volunteer opportunities for programs needed in the local community to attract non-churched volunteers when COFs may not have internal capacity/volunteers to organize and run them……..

It wasn’t in the research but isn’t love a universal language and need? Perhaps church model of a community hub, open doors (and hearts) ready to help, is model (not building closed up except for Sunday a.m.). But would need bilingual/francophone volunteers/leaders/pastors ideally to be present to engage. People can tell if you’re open in humble, loving ways, without strings (dogma - which is so NOT UCCan!!!). How do we shift what and how we do church to become a community centre serving people of God (sometimes we use words of faith too). First United Vancouver is one top of mind model?