

Bonhomme Consultation
Summary Report
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It was a great privilege to work with the staff, volunteer leaders, and congregation at Bonhomme Presbyterian Church. We appreciate the opportunity to partner with you to provide that look in the mirror as you enter your third century of faithful ministry. You are a very strong church that not only has a great history of ministry, but seeks to discern and follow God's vision for your future. This document is meant to give a brief synopsis of the high level strengths of the church as well as current challenges and questions.

There are many strengths of Bonhomme that were revealed in the congregational survey and confirmed in the interviews. Many of the strengths can be summed up in three larger categories as you will see below.

Strength #1 – Biblically Strong and Knowledgeable Congregation – While many churches are biblically centered, few churches have the depth of biblical knowledge and faithfulness among the covenant partners (CPs). You have a high percentage who are very involved in the spiritual formation of the church. In interviews, it was clear that the reason many people have come to and continue to be a part of Bonhomme is the depth of teaching and knowledge that can be obtained.

Strength #2 – High Commitment from Covenant Partners – The CP at Bonhomme have an unusually high commitment to the church and its ministry. This is evident by 72% of people attending 3-4 Sundays a month. There is a high level of volunteerism in the church with 75% of the people volunteering and 15% giving at least 10 hours a week to the church. In the interviews it was evident that even when someone had a concern with the church they expressed it positively with a desire to see the church be the best it could be.

Strength #3 – Support for the Future – There was great support for the future of the church. Many people were excited about projects, such as church planting, that were good for the kingdom even if those projects didn't benefit them directly. There was optimism and enthusiasm for the future of the church and a support for the staff and the leadership.

The church does however, stand at a critical crossroad. The church currently averages approximately 620 in worship. Church size dynamics indicate that there are several points where churches will tend to stabilize in terms of worship attendance. Key stabilization points are an average worship attendance of 400 or 800. This would indicate that Bonhomme will likely either return to an average worship attendance of 800 on a Sunday or it will continue to decline to an average attendance of 400 on a Sunday. The church needs to make a conscious decision as to where it wants to be in the next five years. If status quo is maintained, then that is a de-facto decision that will likely result in the church worship attendance settling to 400 on a Sunday.

There are uniqueness of churches that worship 800+ on a Sunday. If the church wants to reverse decline there are several shifts that need to take place:

1. **Move the session from managing ministry to directing ministry** – It is easy for the session to manage or micromanage the ministry of the church. At congregations of smaller sizes it is appropriate for sessions to do this. In larger congregations the session should spend much more time in higher level generative and strategic discussions and allow the staff to manage the ministry execution.

2. **Staff moves from doers to equippers** – In medium size churches it is easy for the staff to become the doers of ministry. At larger churches, however, it is important for staff to become equippers of others to do the ministry.
3. **Staff move from generalists to specialists** – This is a huge change in larger congregations and it is also harder to implement. Congregations often look for those who can do a variety of things and it is natural for roles to shift a little among staff. The larger a congregation gets the more specialized the staff become. Bonhomme has great staff but in the future it will need to be even more intentional about creating specialist roles.
4. **Role of the senior pastor** – At larger churches the role of the senior pastor becomes more of a specialist with three specific functions. First, they are the primary weekend teacher. Second they invest a lot of time into encouraging, nurturing, and training staff to help their ministries become great. Third, they need to invest significant time in promoting the culture and vision as well as navigating needed change. While the pastor should be friendly and affectionate toward the congregation, the pastor shouldn't be the primary caregiver. The role of primary pastoral caregiver as well as the executive/administrative pastor should be given to others.

In addition to the above structural changes there are a few key questions that should be asked as it relates to the future strategy.

1. **Is the dedicated Sunday School hour the right approach for the next decade of ministry?**
There is an increasing trend away from a dedicated Sunday school hour in part because many younger people will only come to one event on Sunday morning.
2. **What is an effective, simple and integrated discipleship strategy?** Sometimes our greatest strengths can be a weakness if over or misused. While Bonhomme is phenomenal in teaching ministry, it has tended to emphasize the “head” (the knowing part of the faith) more than the “heart” (the being part of our faith) and the “hands” (the doing part of our faith). The church needs to look at the pathway of discipleship and determine what fits a strategy and what doesn't fit a strategy.
3. **How do we engage people in a missional context?** Bonhomme is such a wonderful church that it is easy to rely on the attractive nature of the church to bring people to it. The reality however is that our culture is less and less likely to go to church and so the CP needs to be able to engage deeply, regularly, and authentically with the community in which God has placed them. This will require the church to do more training around this area but will also likely require the church to do less ministry in the building to free people for ministry outside of the building.
4. **How does the church develop leaders?** If the staff is going to spend more time equipping people for ministry there needs to be a clear understanding of the nature of leadership in the church and how those leaders are developed. This should go hand in hand with the discipleship strategy, however it needs to not be lost within the discipleship strategy.

I am thankful for the brothers and sisters at Bonhomme Presbyterian Church. It has been a deep privilege and honor to walk alongside of you in this process. I am greatly encouraged by the maturity, passion, and wisdom of the leaders of the church and thankful for their willingness to press on. As Paul said to the Philippians I am confident that God, who began a good work in you, will bring it to completion on the day of Christ!