

A Call for Proposals

(prepared by First Christian Reformed Church, Calgary, AB)

In an effort to fulfill our response to God's calling on us, First Church has been engaged in getting to know our community. Last spring, a Community Opportunity Scan was initiated, which included a demographic study, a community survey as well as interviews with community leaders. This work was done so we might have improved understanding of our community, with a final goal of better caring for the people of our community.

Recognizing that growing ministry from a grassroots level is preferable to a top-down initiative, Council is now asking you, the congregation, to pray, dream and develop ministries that will bless and serve our community. We are calling for proposals from the congregation for initiatives that members or groups of members undertake in the name of First Church. What you propose is something you and/or a group will do, not something for someone else to do. Council is asking the congregation to pray about, dream and develop plans for ministry activities.

The Process

- May 15, 2005, we hope you will submit to Council, a Letter of Intent regarding your planned project.
- As well on May 15, a Sunday evening gathering will be held to outline the projects and develop or organize additional support needed for them.
- June 5, 2005, we hope you will submit a final proposal for a ministry initiative.
- In the week following, a Community Review Team, made up of a variety of congregational leaders and members, will review all proposals and discern which ones we sense God leading us to pursue. The discernment will be based on specific priorities (see below). Accepted proposals will then become initiatives or projects that the proposing group is committed to undertake. The person or group will be assigned to an organized body of the church (elders, deacons) whose responsibility it is to provide support, encouragement and accountability, but does not undertake the project.

Developing a proposal

1) **Pray:** We encourage you to begin in prayer, asking God to lead and guide us along paths that enable us to care for and love our neighbours in tangible ways. Ask God what he would like to do through First Church. Ask him to show us what he is already doing in our community that we can join in.

2) **Dream:** We know this is a congregation with a capacity to imagine wonderful ministries. We've dreamt and developed good ministries that met needs and connected people to Christ. We know that there are many more ideas brewing in your hearts. So start talking about them with others over coffee after church or in your small groups – have a brainstorming session with friends. What have you always wished to do and not done or wished the church would do? What have you thought would be a great way to care for others?

3) **Plan:** Put a plan together, develop the who, what, where, how and why of your idea. Think through the practical details to help this dream become a real ministry initiative in the lives of real people.

4) **Submit a letter of intent:** Enclosed is a Letter of Intent Form, please fill it out with as much detail as you can. Present a convincing case for your idea and submit it by the deadline of May 15, 2005. Note in the Process section above the steps that follow.

The Priorities

The Community Review Team will be looking for proposals that:

- 1) **Create and Build Relationships** – Preference will be given to projects that are less programmatic and more relational in nature, initiatives that help to build relationships and that connect us, as church members, with our community in meaningful relationships.
- 2) **Connect with adults in the 20--44 age bracket:** Our survey shows this population to be the largest in our community. Our community is young and new to the area.
- 3) **Address Practical Concerns:** Our survey shows several clearly identified community concerns in our neighbourhood. Proposals that address the following concerns will be preferred:
 - Fitness and eating habits
 - Work related stress
 - Finances and debts
 - Spiritual questions, life direction
- 4) **Other:** Preference will also be given to proposals that:
 - a) Send us into the community: off site proposals that bring First Church members into the community. The Church is not a building, its people – you and me. Christ sends the church into the world, which means we are sent into the community.
 - b) Ongoing: preference will be given to proposals that are ongoing or repeating rather than single event.
 - c) Bring church and community members together to serve others, build on common concern to care. We build relationships when we walk and work together with others.
- 5) **Partnerships:** Preference will be given to proposals that partner with existing groups including those in the church but more importantly, with existing groups in the community.

The Proposals

The hope is for a wide variety of proposals, both ordinary and creative, “out-of-the-box” proposals. The goal is to get a few smaller successes under our belt in the first years and venture out into larger scale projects in years three through five.

Included are a few sample proposals to give you an idea of what will be looked for and to get your imagination fired up. You are welcome to take these ideas, develop them and make them your own.

Sample 1: Adopt a Park: Become the custodians of Riverview Park/Sandy Beach area. God has called us to be stewards of his creation. This little piece of creation right on our doorstep is well used and loved by our community and would demonstrate an active concern for God’s creation and for our community. The Riverview Park/Sandy Beach is a Natural Environment

Park and qualifies for the City of Calgary's Natural Environment Adopt-A-Park program. First Church would serve as Litter Control and Dog Ambassadors.

Why? This proposal aims to address a practical need by providing a concrete expression of God's love for creation and for the community. Adopting Riverview Park places FCRC members in the community, demonstrating God's concern for the care of creation. Think of the interesting conversations you will have with dog walkers in the park.

Sample 2: Community Sports Night: Host a weekly Community Sports Night, inviting both community members and ourselves to enjoy an evening of active sports and an opportunity to build relationships.

Why? Many in our community live alone and desire increased social opportunities. They also are concerned about fitness. A sports evening provides a low-key, larger group environment in which to connect around a common goal of fitness and social connection. There are few community locations with a gym to allow for such community activities.

Sample 3: Host an Alpha Course café. In a café setting somewhere in Altadore/South Calgary, the Alpha Course would be offered to those looking to engage and explore the Christian faith.

Why? It provides a meaningful way to explore the Christian faith in a non-threatening environment, also getting church members into the places where our community gathers.

Sample 4: Theology on Tap: Host a venue for young adults to explore issues and topics that relate to the faith and spirituality in a fun and casual environment. Theology on Tap would host various talks by speakers and group discussion to encourage thoughtful dialogue and a deeper understanding of faith. God tells us to bring the gospel of Christ into the streets and to speak it from the housetops, and to go to where people are. Theology-on-Tap aims to discuss matters of faith in a non-threatening, comfortable environment. It would require building a cooperative relationship with say, Ordinary Joe's, developing a schedule of speakers, etc. Much more could be said but maybe you want to complete this picture.

Why? It gets Christians out into the community, bringing the gospel into unexpected places (actually, the places many of our community are already hanging out in). It aims to build a growing community of people centred on an open and honest conversation of faith.

Sample 5: Living Well within our Means: Search for and adopt or design and create a course offered at church that incorporates topics such as budgeting, financial planning, fun without spending a fortune, living out of passion not your pay check. Participants conclude the course with a challenge to make change toward a lower cost lifestyle and find we have low cost options available (hiking group, walking club, book club).

Why? Finances and debts was an identified concern and we can provide an antidote to the relentless pressure of consumerism people experience. Our target age group has in larger studies been identified as having costly lifestyles with more month than money in spite of acceptable wages.

Sample 6: Bank of Volunteer Opportunities: Create and maintain a Bank of Community Opportunities. Identify and advertise volunteer and other types of opportunities, such as joining the A. Calhoun library book club, that are available in the community. Encourage our members to join these activities with the intent to make friends in the community.

Why? Our members may realize that they'd like to make new friends and connections in the community but don't always know where to start. You can help us over the hurdle by providing the opportunities.

Sample 7: Parent and Tots: Mom and Tot groups at the South Calgary Community Centre are very well attended and community members shared that there is need for another group in the area. A Parent and Tot group will be established either by partnering with an existing community agency/group, or by building on our existing Coffee Break (or a combination of these.) The Parent and Tot group will be a place where parents can connect with other community parents, access relevant information and resources and children can develop social and school readiness skills etc. A Toy Lending Library of educational toys could provide parents with an inexpensive way to facilitate their children's developmental growth.

Why? Community members have stated there is need for more of these types of groups. Given the low number of years residents have lived in the community, it is likely many families lack supportive networks (ie. extended family). A parent and tot group provides parents a place to build supportive relationships with other parents and allows members of First to be these supports to community families.

These samples are given as examples but we're likely just scratching the surface here. So start praying, get dreaming, begin planning and let's see what God can do through us to bless our community.

Questions and Answers

Q: I've got a great idea, even a plan, but I'll need help and don't know who has the skills or inclination to meet my need. How will I overcome this obstacle?

A: Good attitude, you realize your concern is solvable and not a roadblock. Yep, you need the help of a system. First Church will need to create a mechanism quickly that lets people advertise for the kind of volunteers they'd like to have them join in their plan. We are planning a Sunday evening meeting on May 15 where people planning a project can describe it and gather assistance from others.

Q: I've got something in mind that has been on my heart for years but it does take some money to get going. What do I do about that?

A: Let's be creative. Consider your idea, is there a possibility that it can be sponsored by local businesses? We can help you work that out. Is your idea something you are so passionate about that it'll be a blessing to you to use your own funds to get it going? We do plan to have seed

money to distribute with approved proposals that have a small, specific budget. We are currently investigating several different sources of funding for seed money for projects.

Q: So I'm thinking about the big picture and say the Community Review Team accepts a bunch of proposals and then all of us go running off in our own direction in the community. Am I seeing a problem?

A: Fair enough, there will at least need to be coordination of communications in the community, and a coordinated approach to the use of the building. We should consider beneficial linkages. Perhaps parents driving children to Wednesday night events are ideally suited to Adopt a Park and can complete some service in the park while waiting for children. Communication and coordination between all new and existing church ministries will be very important.

LETTER OF INTENT

This letter of intent outlines your proposal to First Church's Community Review Team. Your letter of intent must be received by **May 15** either by email or printed copy. This allows Council's Community Review Team to know how many and what type of proposals are being prepared. FULL APPLICATIONS will be due by June 5, 2005.

Proposal Title:

Proposal Idea: Please describe your idea.

What particular **needs or purposes** does your proposal address in our community?

Briefly describe the **activities** you will be undertaking to address the above needs or purposes.

What people do you hope to involve in the project? Describe how the project will build connections between First Church and residents in the neighbourhood.

Are there any anticipated start-up costs? Provide a brief budget.

Contact Information:

Name(s):

Phone #:

Email: