

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL VISION CONVERSATION

RELATIONSHIPS/WELCOMING

***How Do People Hear About/Get Connected to Oakland?**

Relationships in town - Winthrop, Ministries-VBS, Ministry Center

Use of Building by Community Groups:

- Music Programs/Events such as York Choral Society Rehearsals
- Scouting
- Counseling Center
- Schools -Teachers, Children
- Website such as anyone searching for CBF church

Word of mouth from friends, neighbors, relatives

Family connections

Connections to Winthrop University

In the past, one member heard about Oakland in the media. She read about missions/service that Oakland was doing in the community.

Currently everyone consistently agrees that word of mouth and personal invitations are the primary method to hear about Oakland.

Through Oakland Day School and other Church Missions that meet another need. Family Promise, ESL, Ministry Center, and VBS are examples.

Oakland is proximally located to home.

Winthrop connections

Social media

CBF affiliated churches in the area

Blending religions when married and raised in different religions

Invited by friends

Searching for a place to belong and felt the pull immediately at OBC

People get invited through the community

Once in, someone takes them in (ie Betty Jones)

The key for new people is to get involved. There are lots of opportunities.

Committees give you a connection to people you might not otherwise interact with.

Use relationships outside of church to bring people in.

When someone is new, there is a fine line between involving them and asking them to do too much.

Conversations with people at Dr. Offices, new people moving into apartments or neighborhood

Invite people to special events and performances such as baby dedications, choir performances, baptisms, women's luncheon, preschool graduation, boy scout sponsored events

Support for Sullivan Middle School

Ministry Center connections

Sharing what Oakland Baptist has to offer

Heard from a catholic priest (from his own experience)

Word them out

OBC reputation: Ministry Center

Ask/invite people to come

ESL Program

People know OBC from coming to donate

ON-LINE RESPONSES...

Through personal invitations from friends, neighbors, colleagues. Through searching for CBF affiliated churches—our website or CBF sources.

Through a member and Ministries in the community

One of my students that I taught.

Word of mouth and internet searches for theologically moderate churches. Day school has a great reputation

***Once Connected, how do they get folded into the family of OBC?**

Sunday School Classes

Strong Children's Ministry

Strong Music Ministry

Age-appropriate Sunday School for children (when visiting)

Day School ministry

Elementary, Youth, Bed Babies Ministries

Using their individual talents/finding where they fit - green ministry, maintenance, etc.

Finding Committees

Women's Bible Study groups

Women of the Church - Meals, Activities

Friendliness of members

Sunday School is the main connector. Sunday school allows you to know people and their families; Outside gatherings can be icebreaker for Sunday School

Location of the church and proximity. Programs, invitations, outings. Outside brought inside; Children's Sunday School brings opportunities. Great place to raise kids

News of programs through community; Music Programs. A few visits can be deciding factor to membership; OBC was a CBF church that popped up on the internet.; Word of Mouth by neighbors

Keeping people involved; Invitation to groups and services; variety of classes finding the right fit; Knowing people's interests and skills.

Sunday School

Wide acceptance of who they are makes it easy to fit in

Social events, Wednesday night dinners, missions opportunities

Specific comment was made about how challenging it can be for new people to meet existing members

Specific comment was made about how having two separate worship services can be isolating

Specific comment was made about how some members have become so comfortable with online Sunday School/Worship that they may be reluctant to return in person

People are plugged into smaller support groups, the primary being Sunday School.

Youth Groups and Music Ministry were also mentioned as activities that provided a sense of belonging.

New individuals moving to the area were able to use Oakland as a base to meet and become a part of the larger community.

The ability to be involved in local missions, such as Habitat for Humanity, the Ministry Center, and ESL.

The people at OBC are nurturing and make sure you are connected to people with similar interests, a Sunday School class and help you find “your place” within our congregation.

You know people at OBC care about you. You know you are going to be missed if you are not here.

Our group felt vacation bible school brought outside people in. They thought a night vacation bible school is a great idea. It allowed parent to volunteer and for them to connect with other adults inside and outside the church. This would lead into possible Sunday School involvement. They liked Wednesday night suppers.

Sunday School classes that have similar challenges, kids of same ages

Children’s activities

Youth group activities

Mission center

Volunteer opportunities listed in our church newsletter – Bethel Men’s Shelter, Family Promise, New Life House, pathways

Finding common efforts with other churches and groups

Join Sunday School

Join music program

Join Children Program or Youth Group → Playing volleyball is a great idea.

Have opportunity to serve various committee at OBC

Wednesday night dinner

Suggestions:

Having more men bible study (getting to know each and see more accountability in a small group)

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Finding common efforts with other churches and groups

ON-LINE RESPONSES...

Through small groups like choir, Sunday School, youth group, Bible study groups, etc.

With the relationships made at Church

Through Sunday school and being involved in the different needs and activities at church.

I think once they find us, we try to get them plugged in quickly with serving. Nominating committee tries hard to find places for new members to serve. SS teachers do a good job of reaching back out to them. I haven't heard of anyone who left OBC because they felt like they weren't welcomed.

***Where do people fall through the cracks?**

COVID situation of not meeting together

Don't get into the habit of coming

So many other activities competing with church activities

When we don't give them a job - people need a reason to belong

Encourage them to contact us regarding where they can serve - bring them in to talk about their spiritual gifts

Members taking responsibility to get to know new people

Welcome Person no longer at every door to get to know visitors/newcomers

Keeping people involved; Invitation to groups and services; variety of classes finding the right fit; Knowing people's interests and skills.

Need for improved diligence and willingness to contact. Letting them know they are missed. Finding the correct Sunday school class. Open to try all classes and encouraged to find perfect fit. Discomfort causes us to lose people. Challenging for new people to meet existing members

Need to evaluate a new person's interests and find an appropriate responsibility or connection to draw them in

The inability to find a smaller support group or Sunday school class.

Members of the church used to dig through the visitor names every Sunday and would call and try to personally meet with every visitor that came to our church. This practice apparently fell by the wayside at some point.

Ages 19-29 – so hard to draw them in.

College students from Winthrop

Being aware of SS availability for all. Looking at sizes of classes – large classes can sometimes be intimidating for new members.

Possible ideas: allow FCA and others like them to use our building for meetings

Feed Winthrop students during exams – pizza, pancake nights, etc. Maybe even involve the high schoolers in serving on these nights .

Late service vs early service – don't know each other. We should do more combined services and activities.

Do we give people information when they visit (versus when they join) about all the opportunities – activities, ministries, committees, SS classes?

If you wait for them to join, you might miss out

Don't assume that because people have visited multiple times or seem to know lots of people at church that they know about the things they can get involved. Continue to greet, ask questions, pull them in.

Specific suggestions:

Name tags for members – help visitors and new people put names with faces and so they don't feel awkward if they can't remember who someone is.

Make sure everyone has a breeze picture

Don't forget the homebound and people that are living in facilities – Eddie does a great job but members should help

The cracks they feel are not having a dedicated college ministry to serve Winthrop and our groups such as SS and youth are tight knit groups and people are uncomfortable joining (especially youth). They felt we could reach out to high school FCA to promote OBC.

Not welcomed/greeted when they come to church

Not made aware of opportunities they can become involved in/with

Not a good fit

Children do not feel comfortable, so they leave.

People may not feel welcome.

When there too few or too many children (or youth).

Not welcomed/greeted when they come to church

Not made aware of opportunities they can become involved in/with

ON-LINE-RESPONSES...

When they don't make a personal connection with individuals or small groups.

I think once they find us, we try to get them plugged in quickly with serving. Nominating committee tries hard to find places for new members to serve. SS teachers do a good job of reaching back out to them. I haven't heard of anyone who left OBC because they felt like they weren't welcomed.

SERVICE/MISSION-MINDED

***What specific mission/service opportunities have been most meaningful for you personally?**

Growth of the day school has been a wonderful ministry

Youth Trips offer fellowship time and serving the Lord

Ministry Center is a great asset for service

Merry Makers

Families move here and then they bring in the grandparents

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Ministry Center, ESL, Family Promise, Bethel Men's Shelter, youth mission trips, Oakland Day School

Question was raised: Is there an expectation that some mission or service programs should result in attracting new members to OBC?

Ministry Center, ESL, Family Promise, Habitat for Humanity, Bethel Men's Shelter.

Oakland has sent a lot of teams nationally and internationally to CBF for missions, those people have come with a desire to learn and take that information back to Oakland and this is something very special. They have also contributed financially to those missions.

Intergenerational mission trips

Work /interactions with the Day School

Work at food pantries

ESL Classes

Ministry Center – youth work

Family Promise

Our Sullivan partnership

Church basketball – brings visitors to our church with non-church members on teams

Bethel Men's Shelter

Oakland Ministry Center

Good musical program, music production; when OBC invited a musician to come and play at church

Staff works together very well

Do small/mini projects together such as prepare a gift bag or basket for teachers at Sullivan Middle School

Military task force: recognize veterans and their families at OBC, arranged a bulletin board about the veteran, prepare gift cards for active military families

Men's activity to hold each other more

There are many women work together and they were not all from OBC

Alternative worship opportunities such as a coffee shop, evening service

Improved early service

Breakfast before Sunday School to give opportunities for meeting people

Class "Getting to know Oakland Baptist"

Letting people know we are associated with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

ON-LINE RESPONSES...

What specific mission/service opportunities have been most meaningful for you personally?

Mission trips, Habitat builds, and Family Promise

ESL, Social committee

Family Promise and Habitat house builds

Family Promise, HFH, and ministry Center. When younger I enjoyed mission trips. I loved having my children at ODS.

***Which are most significant to the life of our church?**

Ministry Center collecting bread/desserts from Harris Teeter on Saturday and distributing on Sunday

People's talents - find out what they are

Haven Men's Shelter

Finding variety of Local Ministries - something everyone can connect to

Music Ministry - youth through Adults

Bereavement Committee Ministry

Ministry Center, ESL, Family Promise, Bethel Men's Shelter

The Ministry Center, Family Promise, Bethel Men's Shelter, ESL, and Habitat for Humanity all provide a local impact to the community and active involvement from members.

CBF missions provide a larger scale reach and connect members to the larger network of CBF and provide a larger perspective.

Day School – preparing children for kindergarten and beyond, scholarships to give access to students who are in need of the opportunity and wouldn't have it without assistance.

Church basketball can bring youth into our church.

Church retreats and youth retreats

Intergenerational mission trips

Family Promise - opportunities to volunteer.

They felt a big positive was the inclusion of women in leadership roles. That was a main reason why one family joined. They felt social media presence is huge to draw people in and a direct link to YouTube for services is beneficial. A robust youth program is a way to bring people in.

Some way that we can advertise about OBC: billboard, banner?

a small sign with questions and change weekly

put a big arrow pointed to OBC

ask our children to invite friends to OBC

prepare dinner and invite our neighbors to OBC

Mission trips and Ministry Center

Social committee

Ministry Center (I'd love to see it expand to allow us to form relationships with the shoppers and make sure we connect them to true resources that would be life changing. Giving them clothes and shoes is VERY important, but meets just surface needs. We need to find out what we can do to meet the issues that have landed them in such dire situations and connect them to those who can help).

INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM & INCLUSION

***How do we let our neighbors know that this is who we are?**

Church Covenant ...differences will not separate us) possibly and asset and a liability. We believe this is really who we have become but differences did separate us when independent thinkers couldn't go along.

Have evolved to inclusiveness - have differences and discussion and remained together

Leadership has always encouraged diversity - we strive for "Unity in Diversity"

See what kind of Christian we are (7day Christian or Sunday Christian); Actions speak louder than words; Leading by example in kindness, love; Doing what Jesus wants us to be; People see you enjoyment and personality and ask questions; Not limiting ourselves to words like "Baptist"; Addressing heightened awareness. Valuing and hearing all opinion.

Ministry Center, ESL, Family Promise, Bethel Men's Shelter

Use of specific words or phrases that reflect our values

Presence in the community that showcases our values

Social cues, body language

There can be age-related obstacles; judgements on dress, demeanor, grooming of guests outside the considered "norm"

Word of mouth from current members. Otherwise, this is a point that we as a church need to improve upon.

We are not as active at Winthrop, we are not as active in meeting with visitors and guests, we do not communicate how we are different from other Baptist Churches.

Until people attend Oakland, they are unaware of that we are not a Southern Baptist church.

There is room at the table for everyone.

Share our church and church opportunities with any and all.

Invite others

Our social media efforts are a good way to advertise who we are.

Youth events are opportunities to invite their friends.

ON-LINE RESPONSE

Alternative worship opportunities such as a coffee shop, evening service

Improved early service

Breakfast before Sunday School to give opportunities for meeting people

Class "Getting to know Oakland Baptist"

Letting people know we are associated with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

ON-LINE RESPONSE...

By personal discussion of what we are and what we do

working in the community, schools, making alliances with others churches.

I think we need to put flags out front that would indicate we are accepting.

Offer "revival", break-out sort of Worship opportunities that feel lighthearted and not as "serious" as visiting a church. Our congregation loved it when we had the Jarvis Brothers years ago. I went to a Christian rock band concert sponsored by a church in Columbia with a friend and it was amazing. Maybe we could "group up" with other theologically minded churches and "rent" downtown for a Christian concert and bring in a known group like the City does for their summer series. When people arrive, we could have a booth set up about each of the churches and introduce ourselves.

Make sure our website, Facebook, and printed materials states clearly that all are invited and welcomed to attend, including those marginalized. St. John's UMC has it right on their bulletins (Worship guides) that all are invited. Continue to emphasize on communion Sundays that ALL are invited to God's table.

Maybe have members give addresses of unchurched friends and do a mailing to those families like we did at Christmas one time with the brochures and invite a friend fliers.

***How does this core positive play into our future?**

Inclusiveness has been more in the forefront in our world today so more attention to it

Relationship with Sullivan Middle School

Have Picnics and invite neighbors

Day School is excellent for inclusiveness

Our Church DNA in which Covenant promotes us to “Walk the Walk” not just “Talk the Talk”
Find a way to show how caring and welcoming we can be

Showing who we are through missions in our community.

Local focused missions.

A suggestion of capitalizing on the local growth by trying to network with Realtors and new businesses moving into our area, providing them with an understanding of who Oakland is and using that to help us connect with people joining our community.

We need to renew our commitment to connecting and capitalizing on our proximity and relationship to Winthrop University.

Our message to the community should always be that there is room at the table for everyone.

Regular conversations with people in the community about OBC (ie some don't know we have women deacons/leaders)

Consider our signage – some have heard people say that we shouldn't have “Baptist” on our signs because of what assumptions are made

Show people by taking care of them – getting out into the community and walking the walk

Card writing ministry

Working in Sunday School with children and youth

Card writing ministry

Working in Sunday School with children and youth

ON-LINE RESPONSE...

I'm not sure.

its so important- at the same time I think why at Oakland there isn't people from others backgrounds, like Spanish or black if we are so welcoming?

We could be a church that helps with the other forces in town to support racial equality and justice.

We have to identify why folks who are marginalized may not feel comfortable in a church. Is it that the certain worship styles/buildings reminds them of childhood experiences where they were shunned or marginalized as a sinner and out of God's favor? We must make sure our Worship experiences offer an experience very familiar to those who WANT to be reminded of and connect again to their past experiences. AND we must offer a Worship experience that is very different for those who want NOTHING to do with how "big church" made them feel. We can offer service opportunities that have great impact, but our number one priority must be to connect folks to have a personal relationship with God through WORSHIP. If we do Worship right, the service opportunities will be an extension of that genuine love and compassion for God's people. Without that, it's just busy work.

Additional Information Discussed:

Day school can improve. Opportunity to tell them about Oakland and programs like VBS.

Church plays, musicals, puppet shows have faded into the past. Where did these things go? Can they be brought back? Anything's possible.

Question on individual freedom and inclusivity is a hard and deep question. There is no easy answer to "show" that we are these things. Church would benefit another conversation to discuss the feelings and beliefs of individuals versus those that we have as a church.

MAIN CONNECTIONS

family promise
Ministry center
Habitat for Humanity
ESL program
Bethel Men's Ministry

SUGGESTIONS

On Sunday, right before the service starts, there should be a display on the screen showing the activity that we do at OBC. This should include a name and contact info of a person who's in charge of that activity.

BONUS STORY:

I wanted to share this story as well, it highlights an impact that Oakland has had over the years. A young woman was involved with Vision & Beyond which was hosted at Oakland some years ago. She has since attended seminary and applied to CBF through Student.GO for an internship. She ended up meeting Nell Green and was able to share her familiarity and connection with Oakland.

This story, while I'm sure is probably much more impactful as being told by Nell Green, should highlight on how incredibly important and impactful our local missions can be to an individual's life. I just thought it was very cool to see how God works in a person's life to be able to see all of the interconnections.

**Second Congregational Vision Conversation
Analysis and Key Elements
Frank Snyder, Dan Cox, Susan York and Dr. Jeff Hayes**

RELATIONSHIPS/WELCOMING

How do People Hear About/Get Connected to Oakland?

Summary: relationships, use of building, work of mouth, invitation from friends, community projects, location, Oakland Day School, CBF connection, social media, committee work, special services.

Key Elements:

1. Word of mouth/Invitation
2. Community involvement
3. Relationships
4. Moderate/CBF Church

Once Connected, how do they get folded into the family of OBC?

Summary: Sunday School classes, children/youth ministry, music ministry, Oakland Day School, opportunities to fit in, Bible studies, women's ministry, friendliness, location, community ministry, service music, CBF, inclusion, social events.

Key Elements:

1. Sunday School
2. Community Ministry
3. Children/Youth Programming
4. Music
5. Inclusion/Fellowship

Where do people fall through the cracks?

Summary: competing activities, can't get involved, process for getting involved, don't know 8:45 from 11:00, homebound.

Key Elements:

1. Process for getting involved
2. Don't feel welcome

SERVICE/MISSION-MINDED

What specific mission/service opportunities have been most meaningful for your personally?

Summary: Oakland Day School, mission trips, Ministry Center, Merry Makers, Family Promise, ESL services, Bethel, Sullivan Middle School partnership, basketball program, music, Military Task Force, Habitat builds.

Key Elements:

1. Mission trips
2. Community Outreach (including programs listed under summary)
3. Ministry Center

Which are most significant to the life of our church?

Summary: Ministry Center, Community Ministry, Benevolent Ministry, Music Ministry, Oakland Day School, church basketball program, mission trips, youth ministry program.

Key Elements:

1. Ministry Center
2. Community Ministry
3. Church Programming (including those listed under summary)

INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM & INCLUSION

How do we let our neighbors know that this is who we are?

Summary: Church Covenant, restated descriptors of OBC from previous response.

Key Elements:

1. Inclusion/Acceptance (We have theme, but no structure)
2. Development of a next steps process for new members
3. How do we brand OBC

Community Discussion

Key Elements: Poverty, children, food and shelter, elderly, volunteering, ESL, Be Present

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