

## **First CRC Oskaloosa church visit – May 6, 2019**

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George opened with devotions using Ephesians 4:11-16

After compiling our notes, we have tried to format them in such a way as give that gives Classis Central Plains a sense of what is going on in at First Osky. We wanted to highlight what we saw as the praises, concerns, and hopes for the future.

### **Praises**

There was a general attitude of appreciation for and thankfulness for good council meetings and we observed the truth of their fellowship working together for the cause of Christ's church. They celebrated the church's growing (more than before) ability to be flexible as highlighted in a joyous service of celebration involving several professions of faith, baptism of covenant children in the sanctuary followed by an adult baptism by immersion outside in the parking lot.

Both the council and Pastors Jon and Paul expressed a mutual thankfulness for the council/pastor relationship they enjoy. There is a sense of collaboration and unity in mission. There was much laughter at points in our meeting, a general sense of thankfulness for what God is up to in their congregation.

We also got to witness their thankfulness for the quiet faithfulness of ordinary discipleship happening in various ways by many people in their congregation. They listed such things as:

- Doing a profession of faith class
- Pastor Paul taking a group of men fishing at Rathburn Lake as a discipleship class
- Pastor Jon teaching BBQ classes
- Sharing faith stories in services
- Elders love visiting shut-ins
- The GEMS and Cadet programs
- Youngish Adults groups of married and singles 20-early 40's studying topics such as sexuality, angels vs demons
- Deacons being aware of needs and seeking to serve them
- Home visits where they try to visit whole congregation over 1.5 years, divided up monthly

### **Concerns**

We noted a concern around calling new church leadership, a second pastor since Pastor Paul is retiring with a finish date in August. They need to call another pastor but before they do, they have to discern what this position will look like. Before Pastor Dale Visser left, the congregation had approved a second fulltime pastor position. Since Pastor Paul has been working part time, they brought this previous position back to congregation for re-approval before putting a search committee together. The position narrowly missed the required 2/3s vote. So now the council is trying to decide how to move forward, whether to make another full- time job description or a part-time job description. Please pray for them that they may have wisdom to discern how best to shepherd the flock at this time.

They also asked about office bearer training, particularly for their deacons, as they currently have 1 out of 8 deacons who has served before. We recommended studying the installation form to grasp the work they are called to do, and to use the Deacon's Handbook and ask questions of former deacons to discern effective strategies for going about the work they are called to. We encouraged both

their elders and deacons to include an education segment at each of their meetings where office bearers could take turns bringing topics up for discussion and learning.

### **Hopes**

Over the course of the meeting, we picked up on several things they are hopeful about as a council. They are seeking to grow in their community engagement and one of the means they are seeking to use is joining Mission Mahaska in June. They have done this once before and are looking forward to another time where they get many congregation members out into the community meeting concrete needs in the name of Christ. The elders also expressed a desire to improve the effectiveness of their home visits, seeking to make them a blessing more of the congregation sees as a benefit rather than an old tradition.

As church visitors responsible for Good News Chapel, we asked them how they thought we might more effectively work with Good News Chapel. They expressed dissatisfaction with the status quo of their relationship with Good News Chapel, a disappointment in the disconnect between Good News Chapel and Classis. We asked about the history of the relationship and they said it was back in the 80s when Classis sought to encourage them to organize and that did not happen. Pastor Boetsma is 78 years old, has been there 50 years, and they have no plan for after he is forced to step down by poor health sooner or later. The congregation has aged with him and their members are included under 1<sup>st</sup> Osky. As supervising council, 1<sup>st</sup> Osky has sought to make clear to them the need to clean up their membership books. Part of the struggle in dealing with Good News Chapel is there seems to be an intentional distancing from Classis for fear of a financial commitment in the form of ministry shares, and a losing of autonomy of decision making.

The council of 1<sup>st</sup> Osky encouraged us to make contact with them and seek to help encourage them to see Classis as a helper not enemy.