

Church Visitor Report (Team 2) **Bethel CRC; Oskaloosa, IA**

On April 30, we met with Pastor Doug and two officers, an elder and a deacon, to conduct the Pre-Visit for the new church visiting process, in which we discussed the purpose and goals of the new process, and introduced them to the Healthy Church Survey. Everyone seemed pleased with the emphases of this new process. A meeting with the full Council was scheduled for June 10.

On June 10, we met to discuss the results of the survey, which every Council member had taken, and had received results from a week prior to the meeting. We began with introductions, and Rich opened us with an interactive reflection on John 15:1-17 and the importance of bearing fruit. We then went over the data from the survey—assessing, evaluating, and considering possible responses to the survey results. We closed with a discussion of the importance of following through on whatever steps God leads Bethel to take toward greater church health.

It was clear from the survey results and from the discussion that Bethel CRC has much to celebrate. They are experiencing exciting growth in their sense of Christian community, and are eager to be used by God to extend the blessings of that community to those outside the church. There is a strong emphasis not only on biblical teaching, but also on *applying* the Word of God to all of life. In accordance with these things, the deacons have been focusing more and more on service, and on ministering to those in need, both inside the church and outside the church. Additionally, this summer Bethel is hosting its first VBS in a number of years.

The survey results also confirmed what everyone agreed to be the case—namely, that reaching those outside the church with the gospel is a challenge, as is ongoing discipleship. These were unanimously discerned as areas for growth; but at the same time, they are areas that are very clearly being targeted by Bethel's leaders and members alike. Bethel's *Purpose Statement* says, "Because God first loved us, we commit ourselves to 'Loving Him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and reach out to love our neighbors as ourselves.'" Pastor Doug pointed out that the phrase, "reach out," reminds them that loving their neighbors requires a deliberate movement in their neighbors' direction. And it was evident from our discussion that the Council is mindful of this, and is striving to lead the congregation in doing just that.

We are excited to follow up with the leaders of Bethel CRC to hear how God has been leading them toward greater health as the body of Christ.

Respectfully submitted,
Rich Loerop and Aaron Gunsaulus