



SLT Report September 2015

Thoughts on our Structures

An analogy that we have used a fair bit at GoW in the last decade or so, is that of wells and fences. Here are a few thoughts regarding this analogy.

Wells are places that give life and are part of God's Creation. Wells are places where the Spirit of God meets us, and moments when we are open to the Spirit moving within us. They are moments, spaces, or events that transform us. When we experience time at the well, our deep thirst for God in our lives is being met. At GoW we try to remain aware that time at the well should very often be a communal event. Although we may experience a "well" moment as an individual, we know that God, through Jesus, wants us to spread the good news. Indeed, the well is brimming over with the Spirit of God.

Fences are our structures, our creations. Ideally, fences are built to help show us the way back to the well, where our thirsts are quenched. Sometimes fences can be built to impede movement, either towards the well or away from it. Fences can keep people out or keep them in. Fences can be either helpful or a hindrance.



The SLT has spent many hours over the last year, and especially this summer, reflecting on and discussing our GoW structures. As you may recall, this last winter we sent out a survey to the community about our current structure, 'Ways to Belong' (survey results can be found at <http://www.grainofwheat.ca/important-docs/membership-documents/> under 'Ways to Belong responses summary 2015') . We received some very extensive feedback, which has caused us to ask ourselves a number of questions.

Are our structures serving us, or are we serving our structures? Are our structures exclusive? If we make our structures more open, will we lose a sense of community or is this a false tension that we have created? Why does it seem that our younger members are not engaged with our present structures? Conversely, why does it seem that our younger members spend so much time in active community outside our structures? What exactly is it that is keeping us all here? Is the apparent tension between GoW's original communal vision and new ways of doing things an actual tension, or are we missing something in how we communicate with one another? Is it time to throw our nets on the other side of the boat and see what happens?

These are all important questions, and while we may have some answers on the SLT, it is essential that the discussion becomes a larger one. This last spring the SLT gave a rough copy of a new structure, called 'Ways to Engage', to the DMC for their feedback. Reviews were mixed, but it did ignite a healthy dialogue and some interesting questions. The rough draft of the proposal can also be found at the link listed above.

Below is a poem that Roger introduced to GoW a few years ago. The SLT found it to be a very useful way to reflect on our structures. Do we have too many logs on the fire? Have we made enough room for the Spirit to breath in our community? Please reflect on these things and give your feedback to Linda, Andrew and anyone on the DMC.

Fire

What makes a fire burn
is space between the logs,
a breathing space.
Too much of a good thing,
too many logs
packed in too tight
can douse the flames
almost as surely
as a pail of water would.
So building fires
requires attention
to the spaces in between,
as much as to the wood.
When we are able to build
open spaces

in the same way
we have learned
to pile on the logs,
then we can come to see how
it is fuel, and absence of the fuel
together, that make fire possible.
We only need to lay a log
lightly from time to time.
A fire
grows
simply because the space is there,
with openings
in which the flame
that knows just how it wants to burn
can find its way.

SLT Retreat Report

Servant Leaders met for their annual retreat August 5 & 6. It was wonderful to have Tessa join us for the entire event (having Jacob present was a wonderful gift as he represents the reason we continue to plan, dream and look forward in faith).

We started Wednesday morning in a time of prayer. Paul, Scott, Jane and Roger joined us as we asked for wisdom, understanding, vision, insight, patience not only for ourselves during the retreat time, but for the community and the coming year. The rest of the morning was spent discussing Parker J Palmer's article '5 Shadows of Leadership'. It focuses on what affects us negatively as we lead and how do we bring light to those dark areas. While it is a struggle to bring the hidden to light, it is also freeing, encouraging and a source of growth.

Wednesday afternoon, we spent time sharing our dreams/vision for GOW for the next year. These include finding a way to see GOW for what it is today, and telling our story well while moving forward to embrace new opportunities. On a more practical level, we worked on the long list of tasks that lie before us. Many of these are discussions and projects that are already in motion and simply need to continue. They include: the Orientation discussion, our work around 'Ways to Belong', Safe Church implementation, finishing the discussion around the financial piece of T,T & T, supporting a youth team, new music books, and the list can continue.

Wednesday also found us in discussion around these thoughts and ideas:

- * What are people yearning for?
- * How do our structures serve us? Do we serve our structures?
- * Have S & L meetings built our sense of Community?
- * What is a safe space? What is a sacred space?
- * Head listening vs Heart listening

Thursday was spent working on the practical. We focused on broad strokes planning for the year and then moved to more detailed work. This is the everyday of S & L teaching times, DMC agendas, creating a calendar to make

sure we meet deadlines; but also spending time creating the special/sacred times for the GOW family.

We have created our dreams and plans. We hope they feed and water the spirit in each of us as we together strive to be the community God has created us to be.

GoW Calendar (note that some of these agendas may change a bit)

Sept 6 – Send out SLT report (Andrew)

Sept. 7 – SGL

Sept 21 – Worship Team

Sept. 16 – Commitment Ceremony

Sept 30 – DMC – Opening prayer/reflection, What is consensus decision-making?, Finance, TTT

budget follow up, youth connector, safe church update, WTE future, Sunday school update

Oct 7 – S&L – Storytelling and biblical reflection

Oct. 21 – DMC – WTE

Nov 4 –S&L – Storytelling and biblical reflection

Nov 18 – DMC – WTE, youth team update

Dec 2 – S&L – Storytelling and looking down the road

Dec 16 – DMC – Finance, Advent celebration

Jan 6 – S&L

Jan 20 – DMC – Budget preview w/ Finance, youth update

Feb. 3 – AGM. Feb 10 – Ash Wednesday. Feb 17 – DMC

Mar 2 – S&L. Mar 16 – DMC – youth update. Mar 24 – Maundy Thursday

Mar 25 – Good Friday

Apr 6 – S&L. Apr 20 – DMC

May 4 – S&L. May 18 – DMC – youth update

June 1 – S&L. June 15 – DMC



Commitment Ceremony Reminder: Please remember to attend the Commitment Ceremony on Sept. 16th at WEC at 7:30 pm. Membership options are still based on the “Ways to Belong’ model. Please know what your commitment level will look like for the coming year or let your Seed Group Leader know.