

## Summary

Building Shared Vision through Appreciative Inquiry:  
A Congregational Journey  
May – October, 2006

Bragg Creek Community Church of God,  
Bragg Creek, Alberta, Canada.

“We have to understand that we live in a world of emergence.  
When we join together, new capabilities will greet us”  
(Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1998, p. 76).

Carol Scarratt  
[wmtcab@telus.net](mailto:wmtcab@telus.net)

## **FOREWORD**

This qualitative study used action research with an appreciative perspective to develop a shared vision of the strategy the Bragg Creek Community Church of God (BCCC) could take to fulfill God's mission. Through Open Space, survey, and focus groups, the pastoral team, Council, Elders, and congregants shared their views for the future.

The literature review examines existing works on leadership, partnership between leaders and members, and individual accountability within the congregational community.

Study findings revealed that BCCC has an intimate, inclusive, and involved relationship with its congregants. Other key findings included strong support for youth involvement and more community outreach. Recommendations include opening a church community drop-in centre, expanding learning and leadership opportunities, establishing a multi-generational church, and leading an evangelical outreach revival.

If lay people become excited about what they can do for God and for  
their church, the sky is the limit”  
(Wagner, as cited in Rainer, 1993, p. 195).

The objective of this research project was to examine in some detail the main research question –

“What unified direction and strategy can BCCC take to fulfill God’s mission?”

The process is intended to reveal not what the author believes would be best, but rather to identify, analyze and summarize the views of members of the congregation. The study was completed by using three different research methods.

1. **Open Space** dialogue, in which 35 participants (including two pastors, six Council, three Elders and 24 congregational members) considered the following:

What makes you feel valued as a partner with BCCC?

What qualities, values, and goals do BCCC community members possess?

What BCCC qualities influence congregants most in being a partner with BCCC?

What are the qualities that unify us?

2. **A written survey** distributed to 122 congregants with 32 respondents (a 26% return), asking:

Given these unifying factors, what do you think God would want BCCC to be in five years?

What should our priorities be during the next 12 months and what role are you willing to play?

3. **4 Focus Groups** conducted with a total of 21 participants from four main categories of congregants: (Youth 15–25; families with young children; families with older and adult children; semi-retired or retired) who considered -

What could our church do to protect and promote its loving community?

“Indeed, when we listen with sensitivity to the aspirations of others we discover that there are common values that link everyone together”  
(Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 151).

The results of the entire data gathering were summarized and analyzed, in order to determine a set of conclusions that would represent the majority view.

**Major conclusions of this study:**

1. BCCC is a learning organization;
2. BCCC has the opportunity to provide strong servant leadership;
3. BCCC has an opportunity for enhanced discipleship in the community;
4. BCCC is passionate about the church’s future and role in the community;
5. BCCC has many leaders ready to share with the church community;
6. BCCC has the opportunity to harness the positive energy of congregants; and
7. BCCC has the opportunity to allow the youth to assume more leadership.

**Recommendations:**

Study recommendations were developed in a series of team-table discussions between all members of the BCCC research team who considered the research findings, the conclusions and the organizational implications. To explore the recommendations in greater depth, there were further meetings with Pastors Dave Zimmerman and Cris Block.

The literature review was also considered in the context of the systemic nature of BCCC and the objective of the study - to determine the unified direction and strategy BCCC could take to fulfill God’s mission.

As a result the following seven recommendations are proposed:

**1. BCCC should continue to fulfill the Great Commission.**

In order for BCCC to fulfill its mission, it must make followers of Jesus whose lives reflect his teachings, and congregants must embrace the community as a whole rather than focusing on themselves and each other within the confines of BCCC.

**2. BCCC should continue to expand as a learning organization.**

BCCC should create opportunities both inside and outside the church for people to learn

spiritual and life skill truths in programs containing theoretical and practical components.

To fully endorse and promote the concept of BCCC as a learning organization, BCCC should establish a staff or volunteer position of Learning Programs Coordinator to oversee the promotion and registration of the many activities.

### **3. BCCC should establish a leadership network.**

Having BCCC leaders work with local organizations and groups and continue to emphasize serving community needs and current projects and seeking opportunities to share, attraction to the church rather than promotion of the church will result.

In becoming more deeply involved in the real-life experiences of those in the Bragg Creek community, BCCC leaders will demonstrate by their example that ministry and mission can take on social action.

### **4. BCCC members should demonstrate their role in the community.**

As a part of BCCC's desire to become an active part of the community, it is important for BCCC members to become community leaders through active involvement in and commitment to community organizations.

It is important for BCCC leaders not to be seen as elitist or isolated from the community, and this is best demonstrated by a "roll up your sleeves" attitude of service and commitment. BCCC should establish a position for a volunteer coordinator, whose role it would be to link people's passion and opportunities for involvement.

To further facilitate moving out into the community, BCCC should establish a storefront, drop-in church centre in downtown Bragg Creek. In a small community such as Bragg Creek, opportunity is abundant for BCCC to make a significant difference in the lives of many and for BCCC members to leave their mark by using their spiritual gifts to impact the community, wherever needed.

### **5. BCCC should encourage sacrificial serving.**

It is appropriate for BCCC to expect much more of its congregants. Rather than simple volunteer activities, BCCC should expect service on a sacrificial level, through a heart transformation that comes from seeking God through spiritual disciplines. Sacrificial serving is the giving of oneself on an elemental level, driven by commitment of the heart rather than the intellect. A truly spiritual motivation represents an irresistible power for change and will go a long way towards a community-wide recognition of BCCC's leadership role.

Recognizing what people are here for first—to minister and serve and live life for that purpose—and putting spiritual matters first will encourage and enable spiritual hunger. This will lead to works flowing from God's spiritual leadership and image. In this way,

BCCC as a community will be spiritually led.

## **6. BCCC should provide a multigenerational church.**

BCCC should encourage a leadership role across generational boundaries and throughout all church activities and the organization. This is a crucial area for BCCC, as it is for other churches, if it is to grow within the community and fulfill its mission.

In creating a relationship between the adults in the church and the youth, the young need to be connected to the rest of the congregation, feel included and accepted, and become willing to serve. It is not just a matter of finding a place for them in the BCCC service, but rather encouraging them to develop their own service or a designated part of the existing service.

As a priority, BCCC should establish a ministry for the “Tweenies”, so these families can continue to be an integral part of the BCCC community. These children fall between the Sunday School and the Youth Ministry in age and in developmental needs.

This lack of age-appropriate programs may force a considerable number of families to leave BCCC to join another church as their children grow older, resulting in loss of income and loss of relationships. This new ministry could benefit from the active involvement of the youth group, which could in turn benefit from this opportunity to provide leadership.

## **7. BCCC should provide better avenues for communication.**

BCCC needs to provide an avenue for regular face-to-face discussion, with no agenda other than to allow people to say what is on their minds, to express their dreams, fears, and challenges.

BCCC could offer more opportunities for members to give input and to receive vision from BCCC’s pastoral team, Council, and the Elders. These opportunities should be relational rather than organizationally based.

To communicate information about the many projects and ministry activities that BCCC offers, establishing a regular staff or volunteer Communications Coordinator leadership position is recommended.

While this may require additional volunteer time and some administrative expense for BCCC, it will free the pastoral team to do what they do best: live their passion in ministering to the congregation and community of Bragg Creek.

“Thus, the task is not so much to see what no-one yet has seen, but to think what nobody has thought about that which everybody sees”  
(Schopenhauer, as cited in Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1998).