

After the pandemic, what's next?

Every now and then, friends from other parts of the country ask me, "How are you all handling 'doing church' during this pandemic?"

And I truthfully tell them, "With God's help, we're doing OK. We've held things together, and we're starting to focus our prayer and creative energies on whatever comes next."

Then, I add: "The good Lord knows what that might be, although we've undertaken to find out."

I tell 'em how we've been intentional here on the Lord's Hilltop about keeping folks' options open on Sunday mornings. How 25 or so hardy souls might actually join us in the sanctuary for worship, with another half-dozen or so gathering out under the pavilion. Add to that another 15-20 on Facebook Live and an additional half-dozen or so on the conference call.

Add up all those numbers, and we end up with Sunday morning worship attendance somewhere north of 50 of God's children worshipping together.

That's about what it was before the pandemic. And so, we have held things together during a time in which some churches have closed their doors forever.

Now, we're turning our attention to what's next.

A group of 10 good people – members of our church – have come together to form a Vision Team with the goal of figuring that out. They held their first meeting with the Rev. Steven Smith, a well-regarded church revitalization consultant, via Zoom on Thursday evening, Aug. 20.

Going forward, they'll continue to meet with the Rev. Smith once a month. I'll also be meeting with the Rev. Smith once a month to process together how things are going.

Our Visioning Team is asking – and seeking to come up with answers for – a lot of hard questions. Generally speaking, they're asking what we're doing that works – and what doesn't work as well as we might hope. In the long-term, the group will do the hard work of tweaking our church's culture with the goal of ensuring that we continue to thrive and to do God's work in a serious, loving, meaningful way for at least another 130 years.

You'll be hearing a lot more about this group's work during the coming months.

In the meanwhile, if you have suggestions or input, seek one of them out. The group includes Diane Rusak, Paula Barndollar, Tom Griffith, Malcolm Callery, Debbie Colvin, Mary Valla, Laurie Cochran, Joe Valla, Joe McCurdy, and Jennifer Snipes.

Or touch base with me. Any one of us would love to talk.