

# Southwest Community Church moves forward with church health consultation

5-6 minutes

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Since 2015 Sam Breakey has been CBWC's church health strategist, working with congregations to revive their sense of mission and calling. He brings an outside perspective to churches who are re-evaluating themselves. The process is heavy on listening. Sam facilitates discussions with leaders, lay leaders, and congregants to identify the church's strengths and weaknesses, areas of opportunity and limitations within the community. It's no silver bullet, but if the congregation is willing, it will be a catalyst for a revitalized church.

We spoke with Southwest Community Church in Kamloops, B.C. who recently consulted with Sam, to learn about the impact has been on their church. Earlier this year, head pastor Shane Wiebe and the leadership team were working on a two-year plan. They wanted to revive their ministry, but were feeling stuck on the how-to.



“We were struggling to grow, and struggling financially. There was a feeling that though many of us were serving our community on an individual basis, we were floundering to connect with the community in a unified way,” Shane said. “We felt like the church was on an unsustainable pace.”

Enter Sam. He started by listening to Shane and the Board about their concerns. Together they came up with a series of questions for the congregation, aimed at the heart of their mission and calling.

The questionnaires went out, and the church quickly received more responses than their average Sunday attendance. This is unusual, Sam says. Most churches hope for about a 30 to 40 per cent response rate—Southwest Community Church got 117 per cent. Its evidence of how hungry the church is to turn the page, and how engaged they are to do the work together.



The survey was just the start. The next step was a weekend of discussion facilitated by Sam, where the church could talk together about the pressure points.

“When Sam came and shared with us the results on Friday evening, it exposed some of the elephants in the room and really gave us a chance to talk about things openly,” Shane said. They were able to talk about feelings of grief over people who have left, and a sense of resignation that followed. “People were felling like, ‘Why should I do outreach when this is going to happen?’”



Equally as healing was the realization that the congregation is more vibrant than they thought. As an outsider, Sam was able to point out signs of life in the church that they hadn't recognized before.

"That was really affirming for our church to see," Shane said. "We realized that many of our people are acting missionally, we just aren't doing it together. We don't have a good sense of what the church was doing, so we feel like its dying. We realized we're healthier than we thought."

From here, with a new sense of openness and hope, the church is continuing on a re-visioning process. The first of three town hall meetings was focused on asking 'What kind of a church do we feel God calling us to be?' The next meeting will review the results and start asking, 'How?'

Of the process working with Sam, Shane says, "It really scratched where we itched. We all walked away feeling like the steps forward aren't rocket science; they're simple. Having an outsider's opinion let us see ourselves with fresh eyes, and gave us honest, objective feedback."

"We feel so privileged. The two-thousand-something plus expenses that we paid is peanuts to what we gleaned," he added.

Sam, who's consulted with 23 churches since starting this role in 2015, was impressed with the level of engagement at Southwest. "Shane brought a deep hunger for church to move forward," he said. "Some churches are hoping for a silver bullet, but Shane was looking deeper than that. He was looking for how he and others could be put on the right track. It wasn't just about, 'come and fix us', or 'come inspire us', but 'how can you empower us to do these things ourselves?' I left thinking that Shane and the elders had an even deeper commitment to their church. This is the first church that I've heard of that within three months, they already have three town hall meetings laid out. They see it as an action plan to follow through, it's a one-time event, this is a catapult."

He's careful to point out that the real power of this process is when congregations listen together to what the Lord is saying to their church, about their past, present and future. Sam is just one facilitator of Christ revitalizing the church.

Sam Breakey is based in the Edmonton office, but is available to all CBWC congregations. Contact Sam at [sbreakey@cbwc.ca](mailto:sbreakey@cbwc.ca) or contact your Regional Minister to find out more about the Church Health Engagement Process. Note, there is currently a waiting list.

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