

Church Visit Record – Lucknow Community Church
Wednesday, October 13th, 2021

Six officebearers plus Pastor Tim Leferink were present at the beginning of this regular council meeting. A devotion based on Psalm 148:14 was read by one of the deacons. In it we were encouraged to ask not if we were succeeding or failing, but rather whether or not we were fulfilling God's purposes; the cross of Christ at first appeared to be a supreme failure and yet it was a triumph. Pastor Martin Dam began by explaining from the Church Order what a church visit is. He also acknowledged that the pandemic has made ministry difficult for all churches and that, hopefully, in our visit we could look somewhat beyond the obvious pandemic challenges to see what else is happening in this body of believers.

The Lucknow CCRC has been meeting in person again since this June. At the moment they average between 30 and 40 people physically distanced in the building with others live streaming from home. They have been encouraging people from different districts to come on different Sundays. Sunday school has started. Some members are not ready to return and there is concern that the ability to worship at home has made some complacent. Even before COVID, GEMS and Cadets were discontinued at this church due to a low number of children in the congregation and broader community. However, there is a new members class beginning in November and is something to celebrate.

This congregation continues to do many things well. Coffee time fellowship is still vibrant. When a mini-tornado came through the area people in the church family helped each other out. Recently they changed the format for the selection of officebearers and this has encouraged more people to let their names stand. There is a men's group that sings in and outside of the church. For years, the Lucknow congregation has partnered with the Grey-Bruce Health Unit in the "good food box" initiative; demand for these boxes soared during COVID and the church was ready to help.

Challenges include getting people to return to in person worship as the pandemic wanes and finding ways to grow the church. They've had some success in attracting members of the community but it is an ongoing issue. Pastor Tim is the only pastor left in town as other neighbouring churches are vacant. This has placed an extra load on him. Before the pandemic Lucknow CCRC began a visioning process which involved significant congregational input. This has been difficult to do during the pandemic. A gala dinner scheduled for April 4, 2020 had to be postponed. Joan Brady, our classical ministry catalyzer, has worked with them and helped them to examine their past in order to project forward to a healthier future. Their history as a congregation firmly rooted in the truths of scripture is a strong foundation to build upon.

Elders and deacons have kept contact with the members in their districts, mostly by telephone. Leaders have found creative ways to bless member families by dropping gifts off on Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Christmas. Pastor Tim has done many porch visits. He and the council are optimistic regarding the future. Pastor Martin asked if the church had a sabbatical policy as Pastor Tim has been ministering here for seven years. This may be something that they might want to pursue.

Last year the church did well financially and had a surplus. This year it appears that giving is down. They are exploring options for online giving as there may be a generational aspect involved. The visit closed with a story about how the congregation came together to help make a funeral happen outdoors despite the pandemic. The feeling among many following this event was that "the church is still here" in Lucknow. People are still caring for one another and ready to help each other in Jesus' name.

Humbly submitted,

Church Visitors Pastor Martin Dam, Pastor Andrew de Gelder