

## A Look in the Mirror

“**W**hen our council decided to take action toward church renewal, we recognized that if the next five years looked like the previous five years, we would be closing our doors. Something had to happen,” said Pastor Bill Wilton of Sunrise Christian Reformed Church in McMinville, Oregon.

Sunrise is a small church with about 60 members who meet faithfully each Sunday.

In the summer of 2012, Sunrise received a Health and Renewal grant from Sustaining Congregational Excellence to engage in a church assessment that would help the congregation become healthy and vital.

The assessment was conducted by West Coast Church Resourcing (WCCR)—a joint CRC/RCA program. Pastor Carl Leep from WCCR worked closely with Sunrise throughout the assessment.

Wilton said, “The assessment process was a clear and stark look in the mirror. The immediate need to begin the journey



Sunrise CRC remodeled its children's ministry area.

toward church renewal could not have been made clearer through the assessment experience.”

During the assessment, nine ministry areas were reviewed. Strengths and weaknesses were identified and recommendations were made. The council adopted the recommendations, and the congregation immediately began to show support and commitment.

One recommendation concerned the children's ministry space, which was in need of some refreshing. Within a few short months, enough money had been raised to do a full remodel. “It has been rewarding to see people excited about the

ministry and physical surroundings of our once-tired building,” said Wilton.

Other changes include an updated, user-friendly website; the community using the church building for gatherings; the restart of middle school youth ministry; a sabbatical for the pastor; changes to the budget format; and new A/V equipment.

The congregation continues to work on recommendations that came out of the assessment. This summer, a retreat is planned that will include evaluating how well the church is reaching its goals and identifying any changes that still may be needed.

In addition to the visible changes, there have been significant changes within the congregation itself.

“I believe the greatest reward has been the sense of unity of purpose and ownership of ministry,” Wilton said. “Recognizing our weaknesses made us more aware of our strengths and values. This has increased the sense of ownership and gratitude within the congregation.

“There is no doubt that had we not committed to the assessment process we would be steadily marching toward decline and closure,” Wilton concluded. “We believe that God used the assessment process to not only sound the alarm but to reveal a new specific direction.” ■

—by Lis Van Harten

### Pastor-Church Relations

- Advocates for healthy relationships between congregations, pastors, councils, and staff.
- Manages ministerial and church profiles in the pastor search process, credentialing for non-ordained staff, and endorsement of Specialized Transitional Ministers.
- Provides direct consultation for pastors, councils, and congregations in times of crisis.
- Oversees the Continuing Education Fund for pastors and church staff.
- Distributes educational and resource materials for congregations, councils, pastors, and staff.
- Works with and through Pastoral Mentors, Regional Pastors, and Church Visitors to provide support, encouragement, and counsel to congregations and staff.

#### Please pray

- for PCR staff as they respond to organizational changes and new ministry opportunities.
- for the 15 endorsed Specialized Transitional Ministers (STM) who are serving congregations through a time of significant transition, and for the eight pastors who are pursuing endorsement as STMs.
- for congregations that are exploring the possibility of using an STM during their pastoral vacancy.