



New Life Lutheran Church

MINISTRY PLAN

2011 and BEYOND

Ministry Plan for New Life Lutheran Church

Introduction

With an enduring faith in God, with a deep reverence for our Savior, Jesus Christ, and with an unerring belief in the guiding power of the Holy Spirit, the congregation of New Life Lutheran began a journey of Discovery and Discernment in March of 2009.

Led by a dedicated group of individuals, our New Life for New Life Coordinating Team, we as a faith filled congregation:

Wandered though our past to claim those ideals and beliefs which are firmly rooted in our Lutheran heritage

Critically examined our present to identify challenges to our faith and worship, to celebrate the inspiring gifts we bring and offer to God, and to affirm those ministries which best exemplify our core values

Prayerfully envisioned an inspiring future where the power of the Holy Spirit will lead us to faithfully and joyously respond to our obligation to answer God's call to serve all of His people

During our journey, a Vision Panel imagined a future for our church not based upon the limitations of what is but soaring to the heights of what could be. Several Bible studies were conducted to bring the congregation together to study the word and share insights into how we can be God's hands, feet and voice in this world. Key result areas were identified and discussed. The discussion included a brainstorming session to begin the process of constructing a plan for ministry. Teams were assembled and asked to focus on designing a future state based upon our call to ministry.

This Ministry Plan is the culmination of that entire Spirit driven process. The plan is organized in three key areas: Welcoming Community, Faithful Learning Community, and Serving and Witnessing Community. The goals, principles, policies, objectives and strategies compiled in this plan should be used as a starting point to help guide and direct our response to God's call.

We pray the implementation of this plan will lead to a continual refinement of our mission and a deeper understanding of the role we have as disciples of Christ.

Guiding Vision for New Life

Imagine New Life as a group of committed Christians who are not only living out the good news of Jesus Christ in their own lives but are trained and equipped to share the good news about Jesus starting in our community and extending to the world.

Imagine living out God's radical love by not putting our trust in the riches of this world and instead trusting God to faithfully provide all that we need. Instead of seeing how much we can take, we bewilder the world as we give to God first without worry of our money, schedules, and self.

Imagine people truly knowing God and growing in faith by routinely setting time aside for studying scripture and prayer, individually and with others. We joyfully and regularly come to worship to confess our sins, receive forgiveness and offer our praise to God.

Imagine small groups are engaged in relationship building centered on bible study, church fellowship and common needs. We go beyond our established circles to reach out to others, of all ages and build friendships one conversation at a time. No one is too dirty to be hugged, no one is too poor to be asked to give of their gifts, no one is too quiet to be unnoticed and no one is too sinful to experience the community of New Life.

Imagine people having a deep need to live out their faith and are empowered by the Holy Spirit to serve the challenging needs of a struggling community. People are unable to sit still and want to be able to see where they can be connected to God's work with their hands. Wherever families and individuals struggle, we support and encourage, because there is poverty, we provide food and comfort, because there is loneliness and abuse, we become a friend and advocate and when people are searching and confused we provide them the guidance and direction to live upright lives for God.

Imagine in a society where it is common to see great divisions in age, race and status, we come together as a community; the young and the old, the majority and the minority, the rich and the poor; to listen and share together faith stories, read together God's word, pray together and share our lives together. As a church community created by God for God, we gladly receive and accept all who visit and extend ourselves to help each person on their faith journey.

Key Results Areas and Goals

Welcoming Community

Goal: To be publically known as a place of hospitality and welcome to ALL of God's children as we live out the good news of Jesus in our own personal lives and as members of the body of Christ.

Faithful Learning Community

Goal: To build a community that integrates learning together, encouraging each other and sharing in God's love throughout all phases of our Christian faith journey by building strong daily faith habits: stewardship, worship, study and prayer.

Serving and Witnessing Community

Goal: To be known as supportive and faithful Christians empowered by the Holy Spirit who use our thoughts, actions, hands and voices to overcome the barriers that divide. We will strive to demonstrate God's love by providing comfort and care. As disciples of Christ, we will reach out to those in need in our congregation, as well as those in our community, state, nation and world.

STRATEGIC ISSUES

There are several key societal factors that impact our church community, current members and potential new members. These factors were discussed in order to define our current environment and how they impact our ministry. They present obstacles to being true disciples and must be addressed in the implementation of our ministry plan. By minimizing these obstacles, this will allow us to be more effective in fulfilling God's plan.

Balance: Time is the scarcest resource in our lives. It has become increasingly difficult to lead a balanced life style. We feel the need to work more to prevent downsizing or to get ahead or stay afloat. Our children desire more activities outside the church. We have increased the stress in our lives. We find ourselves juggling priorities in an attempt to get things done. Unfortunately, this leaves less time, energy and money to care for our own spiritual and physical needs as well as serving others. We have deep spiritual hungers that are not met. We have an opportunity to reconnect with the deepest sources of blessing in our lives as we embrace core Christian practices

Family Involvement: We are facing changes in the value of a strong family life and makeup of a family. Often families are being stretched and fragmented due to the many challenges, outside forces and distractions. We are challenged to strengthen our families with strong Christian values, providing opportunities for time together as a family, and providing direction and encouragement to family life.

Technology/Media: Quick communication and information through many different media has quickly erased the distinction between work and leisure and created information overload. Advertising has created worldly images for us that distort the truth; that we have been created in the image of God and that only the bible holds what is true. Technology can help spread the gospel and relay information quickly, but it can't replace the need for human physical contact. We have an opportunity to seek what is good and true about technology and the media, and find ways to use it to the glory of God.

Stewards/Economy: Culture and economy are shifting from a sense of abundance and entitlement to a foundation of scarcity and accountability. The assumptions that have recently shaped much of our lives have changed. We have the challenge to rebuild living patterns in this new framework and the opportunity to feel the wonder of humility and gratitude. We are challenged to be good stewards of all the gifts God has given us. We share an opportunity to enrich one another by the wise, faithful and responsive use of all God's gifts.

World's Attitude Toward the Church: Our out of balance lives has forced us to push God into second place, pushing Him aside for other worldly activities. We have allowed others to establish the priorities in our life by work schedules, sports schedules and gatherings. Church becomes an obligation of duty and activities that interferes too often with our outside lives.

The opportunity and challenge is to put God first; connecting our church with our outside lives.

Community Demographics: Our community is maturing and changing. We are ending a period of rapid growth and moving into a period of stabilization as people put down roots in our community. We still have growth west of Weber Road and a growing Hispanic population. We have the opportunity to serve our changing community and the challenge to sustain our congregation when not bolstered by natural community growth.

“Me” Culture: Often people look at an experience to what they can get out of it instead of what they can add to it, as if they deserve or are owed something “just because”. The desire to be successful in this world sometimes takes precedence over the desire for Christian values and serving others.

Church Community: The busyness of our lives, the size of our church, attendance at different services and diversity of our membership represent an opportunity and a challenge to our commitment and availability for fellowship and community life. We have an opportunity to meet each other anew as men and women growing in faith because of each other, not despite one another. We have an opportunity and challenge to help one another developing a biblically literate and informed faith life. Many of us have been members of a church for a good while, but have lost or lack a deeper relationship with Christ. We have an opportunity to renew our spiritual life and commitment to faith formation that does not end.

WELCOMING COMMUNITY

Goal:

To be publically known as a place of hospitality and welcome to ALL of God's children as we live out the good news of Jesus in our own personal lives and as members of the body of Christ.

Principles:

The people of New Life Lutheran Church will walk in a way worthy of the Lord (*Col 1:10*) reflecting the presence of God through the dynamics of hospitality, loving acceptance of every person, a tangible love of one another and a patient acceptance of one another's weaknesses.

Policies:

We will be deliberate in our hospitality within and beyond the walls of our building.

We will be deliberate in recognizing the importance of building relationships through communication and visibility.

We will actively maintain existing connections and seek out new ones.

We will actively seek to recognize and resolve conflict within our church and beyond with openness and love.

The importance of a shared common life and Christian fellowship is evident by the time and commitments we will make to be with one another.

We will seek to blend old traditions with new ones.

Objectives:

All members and visitors will experience a sense of belonging through worship, congregational gatherings, and fellowship.

Cultivate an atmosphere and environment that draws people to Sunday worship.

Develop a greater sense of community among our members.

Become known throughout Bolingbrook and the surrounding area as a welcoming community.

Strategies:

Create more opportunities to develop connections between members, encourage deeper conversations, help people develop listening and conversation skills, provide structure for people with similar interests/needs to gather.

Create opportunities to bring the community into our church for fun and fellowship.

Be deliberate about making connections between new members and existing members in shepherding/mentoring relationships.

Explore and identify resources that are available for teaching healthy responses to conflict.

Increase our visibility in the community.

Develop a Christian response/outreach to individuals who no longer attend worship due to conflict, family challenges or physical disabilities.

Examine opportunities to improve our website and the use of other current technologies as a way to communicate our mission, vision, values and ministries.

FAITHFUL LEARNING COMMUNITY

Goal:

To build a community that integrates learning together, encouraging each other and sharing in God's love throughout all phases of our Christian faith journey by building strong daily faith habits: stewardship, worship, study and prayer.

Principles:

As a church community we extend ourselves to help each person on their faith journey as we grow in fellowship with one another. We experience a special fellowship with each other in our commitment to attending Sunday worship. The active practice of stewardship of all God's gifts is a way of life and creates a closer walk with God through our increased trust and faith. We are committed to lifelong faith formation by establishing and maintaining daily habits that are biblically based and spiritually led.

Policies:

All gatherings will provide opportunities for sharing and celebration of each other's gifts, allow opportunities to grow in faith and receive support and encouragement from the congregation.

Our worship will be centered on God with a strong focus on participation in prayer, singing, reading of scripture and receiving the sacraments.

Leaders and members of the church will engage in regular reflection, study and sharing of the scripture.

New Life will be a place where stewards are developed and nurtured.

Objectives:

Create an atmosphere where studying the bible is appreciated as a way to enhance our faith journeys.

The worship experience will build a connected community and help to guide the formation of daily Christian habits.

Individual ministries, committees and leadership would be dedicated to cultivating a climate of thanksgiving.

Through greater understanding of God's word, increase stewardship throughout all generations of the congregation in all aspects of talent, time and treasure.

We will strive to increase our unity of purpose by insuring the entire congregation is engaged in dialog on the same topic throughout a season by coordinating sermons, Sunday school curriculum, bible studies, dinners at home, choir selections, and self-study resources.

Establish and strengthen sharing of faith between intergenerational groups.

Strategies:

Hold congregational receptions and gatherings outside of regular worship and ensure they include a time for fellowship which would create opportunities to develop and grow in faith, and to support each other on their faith journeys.

Explore creative ideas for worship; to allow for people of all ages and families to experience a more meaningful worship, to allow for increased congregational participation, and to facilitate a clearer understanding of worship and its elements.

Strive to offer a variety of small group opportunities such as bible studies, meetings at interesting educational locations, and connecting people with similar interests.

Strive to make learning fun by using a variety of technologies, formats, and materials to encourage people to be involved in learning.

SERVING and WITNESSING COMMUNITY

Goal:

To be known as supportive and faithful Christians empowered by the Holy Spirit who use our thoughts, actions, hands and voices to overcome the barriers that divide. We will strive to demonstrate God's love by providing comfort and care. As disciples of Christ, we will reach out to those in need in our congregation, as well as those in our community, state, nation and world.

Principles:

We are a faith based community called to be light for the world and salt for the earth. We are disciples of Christ called to serve. We have a commitment to participate in worship, to actively engage in fellowship, to serve others, and to truly see the needs of the wider community through God's call.

Policies:

We will actively seek to discern God's call and passionately respond. New Life will become a congregation of gratitude, generosity, joy, hospitality and service by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Together we will act upon our Christian habits and practices to be an integral part of our community and become better disciples. We will strive to make community connections in order to better understand our environment and serve God's people.

We will seek ways to use our facilities as a resource to increase New Life's work for God.

Objectives:

Heed God's call to be disciples by encouraging volunteerism within and outside of our congregation.

Educating the community on the resources we offer.

Identify opportunities for all generations to serve.

We will seek out ministries which serve the needs of God's people and have the potential to elicit a strong community response to join us in service.

We will develop a community of faith that is eager and willing to hear the call of God, thoughtful and prayerful in developing a response, and disciplined and passionate in our follow through.

We will take a leadership role in asking community organizations to respect our time set aside for worship and fellowship.

We will offer training to members/leaders so that they will be well equipped to serve as God's hands and feet and feel confident in witnessing to His presence in the world.

Become known as a community of action.

Strategies:

Assess the value of current spiritual gifts inventory. If it has value, offer training on how it can be used effectively. If it doesn't have value, find another tool to identify the spiritual gifts of our congregation.

Establish a program that will educate and inform the congregation on issues on social justice.

Host faith based retreats to grow our sense of discipleship.

Sponsor community forums to discuss the Christian responses to current issues.

Encourage and sponsor programs which meet people's physical needs in the hope they can grow into meeting their spiritual needs.

Assess the need for bilingual ministries.

APPENDIX

Potential Inspiration for Action:

Develop sermon messages that reinforce the importance of relationships.

Remind members that name tags are available at the beginning of worship.

Scroll a welcome message on the screen prior to worship welcoming visitors and reminding people to wear name tags.

Examine the use of and viability of pew pads.

Survey members about use of name tags and try to identify reasons why name tags may not be utilized by some members.

Develop a way to better recognize visitors and guests:

A guest book sign in

A guest welcome gift (i.e. A bag of microwave popcorn with a little note that says "Thanks for popping in" with information about our church-worship hours, vision, etc.)

Guest name tags (possibly at sign in book)

Follow up visit (bread?) and invitation to come back.

Establish a task force focused on using technology to improve our visibility.

- Set expectations for what will be included on the website
- Establish timeline for website construction
- Determine resources (human and other) needed to maintain and update website
- Explore the viability of using other social networking sites for communication and connectivity.

Plan social events in addition to/and beyond the New Members Luncheon that include Shepherds and New members (bowling, movie night, carry in dinner)

Develop a program that would involve the congregation in nurturing a sense of connection with members, who are away from church for any reason (college, military, snowbirds, nursing homes, etc.) through care packages, cards, prayers, telephone calls, visits, etc.

Examine ways to bring members together for worship and praise that might include special unified worship services, retreats, etc.

Identify resources/grants that can be used to fund workshops or training in conflict resolution that follows a common discernment process that is centered in Christian practice.

Establish a timeline for providing workshops/training for various groups (conflict between individuals; family conflict; conflict related to change; conflict faced by youth; etc.)

Provide training in the skills necessary to mediate conflict that are centered in Christian practice and that recognize that conflict is a natural part of our humanness and as such should not be feared.

Consider how we welcome various groups of people, i.e. elderly, single, youth, unchurched.

Hosting seminars that address a variety of topics relating to Christian faith development such as interfaith discussion, music in church, living a balanced life, Christian parenting, Christian budgeting, strengthening families and prayer. Format includes speaker and discussion to encourage participants.

Offer opportunities for adults to visit with Sunday school classes and share experience with youth.

Offer a question box format for people to ask questions on a variety of topics based on worship, bible, Lutheran theology or the structure of committees.

Incorporate stewardship education into youth education curriculum.

Establish ongoing communication using various methods regarding stewardship principles.

Provide congregation wide resources for financial planning in small group setting such as Momentum, Financial Peace University, Crown Ministries, or Good Sense.

Schedule open community prayer events.

Identify opportunities to invite the community in through community service events such as guest speakers on specific topics.

Evaluate our building and identify capital improvements that need to be made to better utilize our building.

Identify ways to utilize our space to serve both New Life members and the community. Suggestions include but are not limited to: Mom's day out, couple's night out, community Thanksgiving/Christmas dinner, potluck/carry in dinners, food drives, English as a second language, job fairs, wellness stuff, dinners/plays/talent shows, etc.

Identify opportunities to work with other congregations in the community to serve Bolingbrook through cooperative opportunities.

Identify needs for training members of our congregation so they are better equipped to serve.

Identify resources to train our congregation so they are better equipped to serve.

Provide training to members of our congregation focused on training for leadership and service.

Identify a plan to communicate service opportunities in our congregation and beyond.

Develop a world focus of serving as we grow.

Have a central resource for members to access service opportunities.

Hosting seminars for members and community that address a variety of topics relating to Christian faith development such as world hunger, AIDS, worldview of Christianity, needs in our neighborhood. Format includes speaker and discussion to encourage participants.

Examine the use of our outdoor sign as tool for outreach (i.e. including inspirational messages on the sign, communicating small group opportunities).

Be more deliberate and expand mentoring/shepherding groups to match people who are facing common life situations/challenges (i.e. aging parents; death/grief; young families; singles, etc.).

Work with our community leaders to identify the needs of our community.

Define ways to work together with community leaders to identify combined resources and ways they can be used to meet needs in our community.

Develop a plan of action for addressing needs in our community with the local ministerial.

Communicate the needs of our community to our congregation through guest speakers or temple talks.

Work with LSSI to identify issues related to social justice and to educate our congregation about these issues.

Study the outreach ministries of other communities in our area.

Promote opportunities for the community to join us in service opportunities.