



Assisting God's People with Pursuing His Mission

A DIAGNOSTIC ANALYSIS

FOR

**GOOD SHEPHERD EV.
LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Downers Grove, IL

October 2020

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INTRODUCTION

Good Shepherd Lutheran first contacted Crossroads Consulting Ministry in May of 2019. The director of Crossroads and some of your leaders discussed the desires of your congregation, considered several ministry planning options, and a Phase 1 foundation-laying seminar was conducted for all members in November of 2019. Your leaders then decided to seek assistance with ministry planning utilizing the comprehensive approach.

A consultant team including Pastor Elton Stroh and Mr. James Sievert was formed to assist Good Shepherd in conducting a Phase 2 diagnostic analysis. The purpose of this analysis was: (1) to obtain an accurate description of your congregation in its current spiritual and physical state – including blessings and challenges, and (2) to create a data baseline from which to plan future ministry and measure the outcomes of future efforts.

Prior to the on-site analysis visit, some members completed work on a series of diagnostic instruments designed to provide you and your consultants with an objective picture of your congregation. These tools – together with additional congregational and community data – helped your consultants develop preliminary hypotheses and identify significant areas to explore more fully during the on-site analysis visit.

The on-site visit took place on October 23-25, 2020 and concluded with a preliminary oral report. This printed report is an expanded version of the oral report and is provided for the purpose of giving you a "snapshot" of your congregation as your consultants currently see it. This analysis is your starting point for confidently planning, prioritizing, and – with God's blessing – accomplishing kingdom work in the years to come.

You are now asked to react to this report. Please use your copy to highlight significant points, identify questions you would like to ask, and call attention to needed corrections. Please add your personal perspective to the process. So you don't miss the review of this diagnostic analysis, enter the following into your calendar:

An opportunity to review this report, ask questions, and offer corrections will be provided just before the Phase 3 "*Preparing for the Future*" seminar. Watch for the date and time of the review and seminar, both of which are for ALL members: A training session for leaders (listening session facilitators) will follow the seminar.

Your review and acceptance of this diagnostic report is the last step in Phase 2. With God's blessing, subsequent phases will help your congregation (1) build consensus as you discern a prioritized vision for future ministry in your community and (2) design strategies and action plans that purposefully involve more people in accomplishing your agreed-to ministry goals. The next phases of the strategic planning process are: Phase 3 (Mission/Vision Setting) and Phase 4 (Implementation).

Crossroads assists congregations by helping them identify their strengths, address their concerns, design and communicate a compelling vision, and develop intentional strategies for enhancing their outreach and nurture ministries. Additional information about Crossroads Consulting Ministry – an Executive Summary, Core Understandings, Key Values, Frequently Asked Questions, User Comments, and more – is available online at www.timeforcrossroads.com.

Healthy congregations have a clear sense of mission, capable and spiritual leadership, an energized membership, and a strategic plan to reach the lost and grow people in Christ.

MINISTRY CONTEXT AND CONSENSUS

This section focuses on your congregation's ministry context and your consensus for carrying out ministry. Both are important subjects to consider during this analysis phase of your ministry planning process.

1. Your Context for Gospel Ministry

Because each community is unique, it's important to view ministry (especially outreach) in the context within which it takes place. This is one reason there are frequently different ministry challenges and opportunities among our synod's 1,269 congregations.

Here is some information on your ministry context from the Community Profile you completed and other sources. The primary focus is on the people, schools, and churches of Downers Grove.

- Good Shepherd is located in an area of Downers Grove that is both a community and commuter location on a main E/W 4 lane artery (63rd Street), very near a main N/S artery (Fairview), with easy automobile access.
- You are in a fully developed suburb of Chicago in DuPage County, IL. To the east, old shopping malls are being torn down and new stores are being built. Several new senior care facilities have opened. To the south, 75th Street has multiple malls with many big box stores. To the north/west DG town center is being rebuilt with many condo/apartments, retail stores, and has a commuter train stop. To the north, it is mostly residential up to Ogden Ave, which is one continuous strip mall after strip mall. Further north of Ogden on Main, a huge health care hospital and offices (Good Samaritan – Advocate System) are located, as well as large office parks along the I88 corridor.

- There are solid public and private schools and churches, excellent village services, and low crime. Public schools need the private schools to succeed; they cannot fit all the children into their existing facilities.
- Seniors are selling homes for tear downs, and younger families are buying more expensive new construction. Millennials and GenX groups are growing.
- South and East the Arab population is growing. There is a strong Eastern Europe presence. African/American presence is small; Latino presence is strong.
- Residents have been politically conservative, but are now shifting to moderate conservative.
- Residents have historically identified with “neighborhoods” defined by public school boundaries. The dividing line is generally the commuter train tracks. The north is much more affluent than south. Biggest changes are in the south neighborhoods.
- More two-worker families need pre/post school care for children. New preschools are being built, so there are now many in the area – both public and private.
- Average commute time to work is 25-30 minutes. 85% drive, 9% public transportation, 6% carpool. Over 21,000 commuters travel from 5 to 90+ minutes.
- DG has many faith opportunities other than Good Shepherd/WELS. E.g., LCMS, ELCA, Reformed Church in America, Disciples of Christ, United Methodist, Catholic, Baptist, Seventh Day Adventist, United Church of Christ, and Non-Denomination.
- You share no ministry efforts with area WELS congregations (6 within 17 miles). However, WELS pastors within the Central Circuit share preaching for midweek Lenten and Advent services.

Martin Tully (16 years as DG council/mayor), shared the following:

- Strengths: DG has a deep and authentic history (dating back to 1832) that keeps people here and draws them back to raise families, enjoy festivals, parks, schools, neighborhoods, and churches. There is diverse housing for all range of incomes. Location, access, downtown.
- Challenges: Aging infrastructure, police/village facilities, social/mental services, storm water and sewers. Public does not want more taxes, values shifting from conservative to less conservative. Cost of private versus public schools.
- Good Shepherd: Could use festivals to showcase congregation, maybe partner with local chamber or social groups to help meet needs, know little about GS other than a mom who enrolled her children in GS’s school in the past.

Kevin Russell (Superintendent of PK-8 public schools), shared the following:

- Strengths: Many lifelong residents. Many young families relocate back to DG for the neighborhoods, schools, pride, churches. Strong public/Catholic school partnership due to curriculum, Title 1 Funds, bus routes, Special Ed services.
- Challenges: Competition between North (affluent) and South (poverty) economic reality. South won’t support referendum for new or improved school buildings. 70% of residents have no children in schools, so there is apathy; need to increase connections to the community. Declining private enrollment.

- Good Shepherd: Maybe consider pre/post school care. Promote view that stronger families and stronger faith result in stronger schools. Improve family value connections with children. Focus on winning back millennial and GenX parents. Kevin grew up in DG and has been aware of GS for many years, but he does not know much about your church/school.

Again, understanding the make-up of your community is important to your church's ability to serve people in your ministry area. There are demographic descriptors such as age and income profiles, ethnic diversity, priorities for church-sponsored educational programs, education achieved, predominant vocations, rates of population growth (or in some cases decline), and the like.

Probably more important to your current and future ministry efforts are lifestyle issues: structure of families, people's interests and priorities, transportation patterns, daily schedules, religious convictions and practices, and more. You want to understand the attitudes and outlook of people in your community, their hopes and fears, social problems, and perceived needs. Above all, you want to know how best to reach them with the only message that saves sinners, i.e., the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



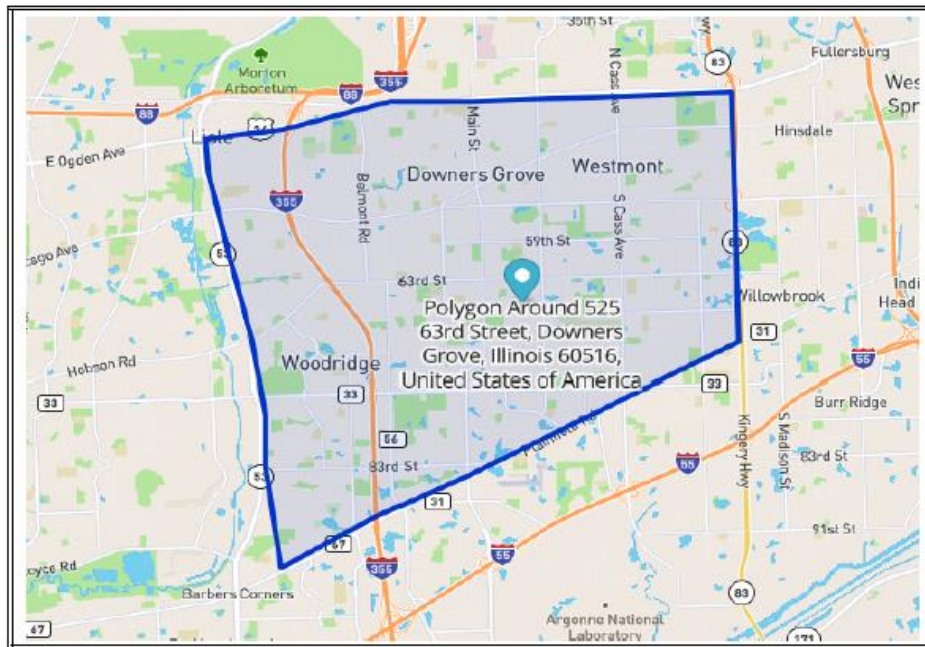
For those reasons, we did some community research on the internet, personally explored your community, and discussed your ministry setting with a variety of people. Additionally, to understand your ministry setting more fully, your consultants ordered a number of reports from

MissionInsite. These reports provided an accurate and comprehensive profile of your defined ministry area.

The following MissionInsite reports are now available for your review:

1. **QuickInsite** (provides an initial impression of a study area through a set of 12 demographic variables, the top 10 Mosaic Segments, and 5 Religious Beliefs and Practices)
2. **ExecutiveInsite** (includes 12 "Insites" into the study area's story, incorporating both demographic and beliefs and practices data)
3. **FullInsite** (provides an extensive demographic portrait of a user defined geographic area)
4. **ReligiousInsite** (provides insights into community beliefs and religious preferences)
5. **ReligiousInsite Priorities** (captures the priorities of some survey questions based upon strengths of beliefs plus the direction of the beliefs corresponding to the fuller reports)
6. **MinistryInsite** (focuses on practical applications relative to life concerns, reasons for non-participation or considered nonparticipation in a congregation or community and a list of preferred ministries or programs)
7. **MinistryInsite Priorities** (also captures the priorities of some survey questions based upon strengths of beliefs plus the direction of the beliefs corresponding to the fuller reports)

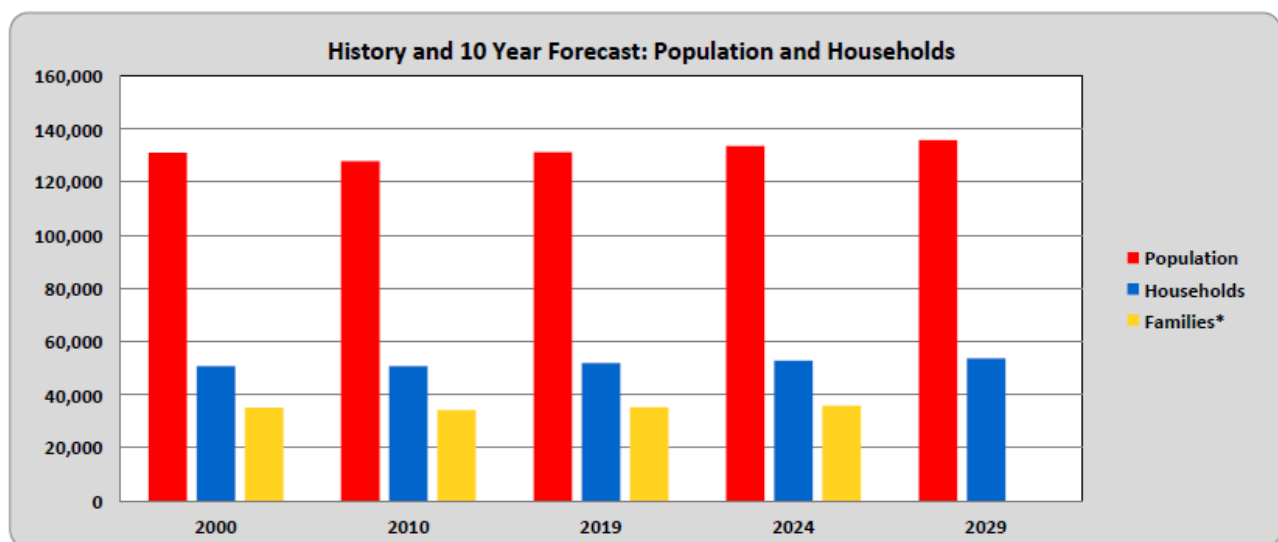
Here is the study area on which the above reports are based.



Here are some demographic highlights that help to understand the residents of your area and their lifestyles. This information is gleaned primarily from the MissionInsite reports. All of the reports, which contain much more community data, have been shared with your leaders. Additional study of the reports will help you keep your neighbors in mind as you establish a vision for your congregation in the next phase.

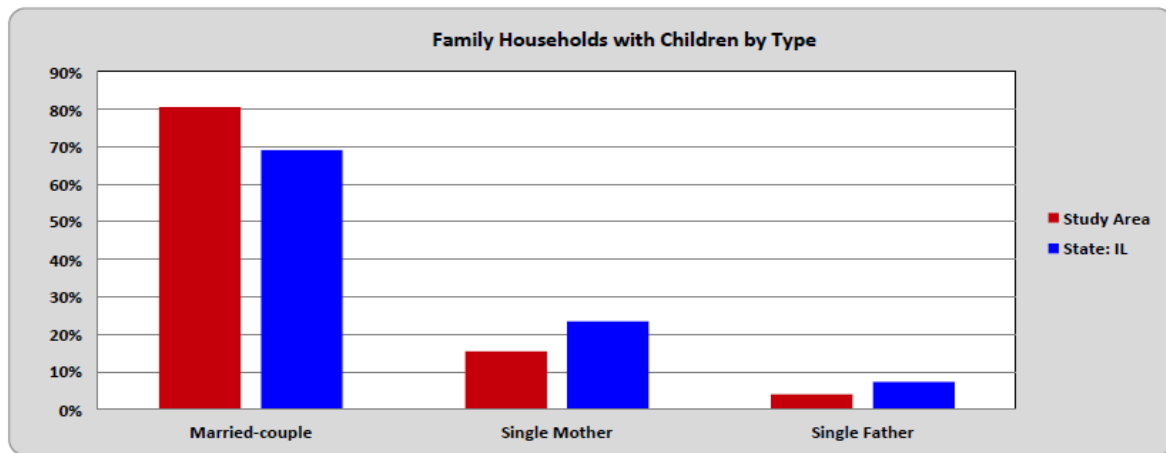
Some highlights from the QuickInsite report:

- Population is the most basic demographic characteristic. It indicates how many persons reside within an area and how that total changes over time. In addition, future population is forecasted looking out 10 years.

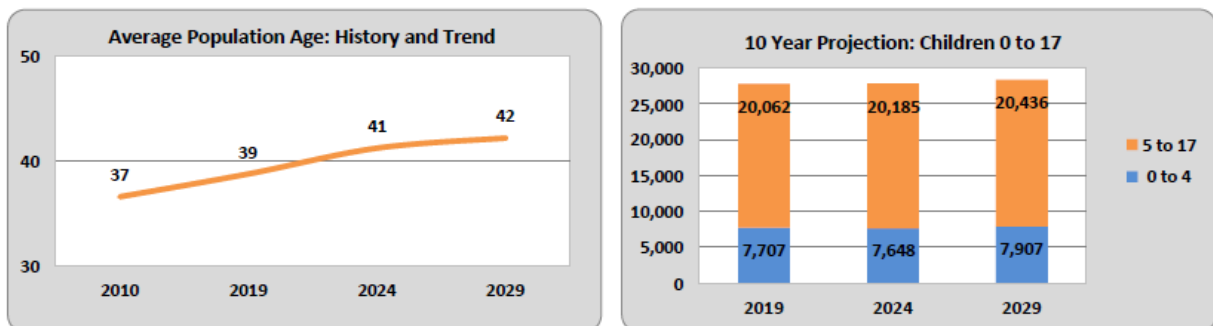


NOTE: Family Household data is not projected out 10 years.

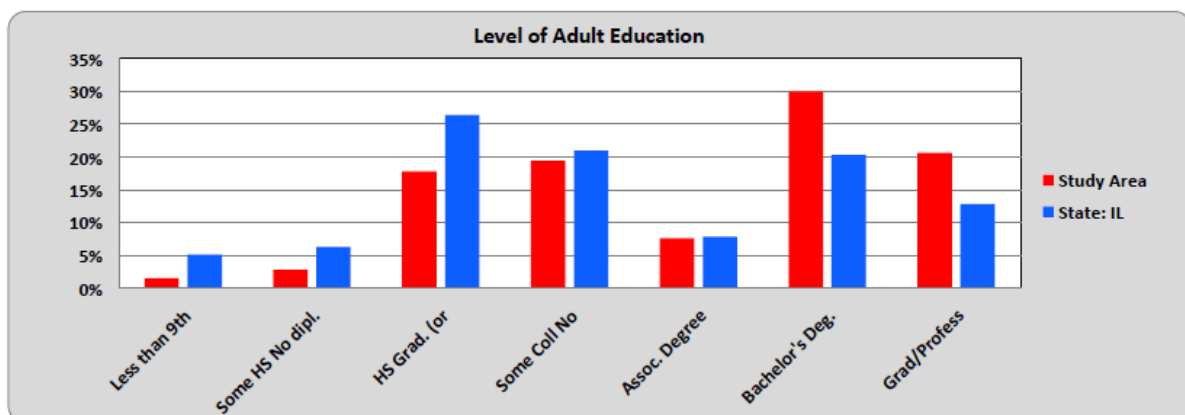
- Family households with children are changing. The traditional married couple structure is evolving into many different family expressions in which children are being raised. These data provide an insight into the family structures within the study area and then compares them to the state.



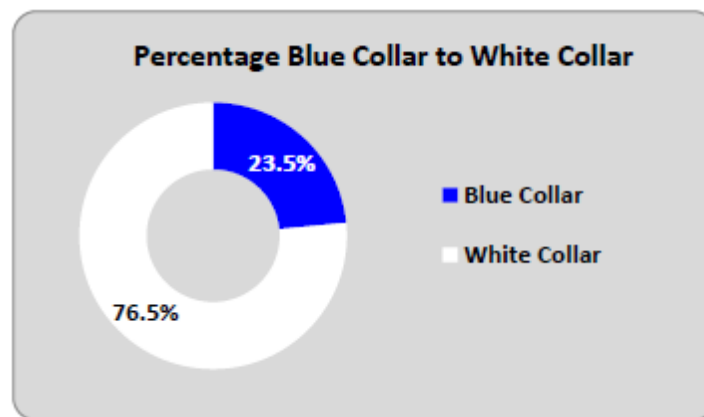
- The age history and forecast reflects change in a community. Many are aging as a consequence of the aging Baby Boom generation and the decline in live births for many years in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.



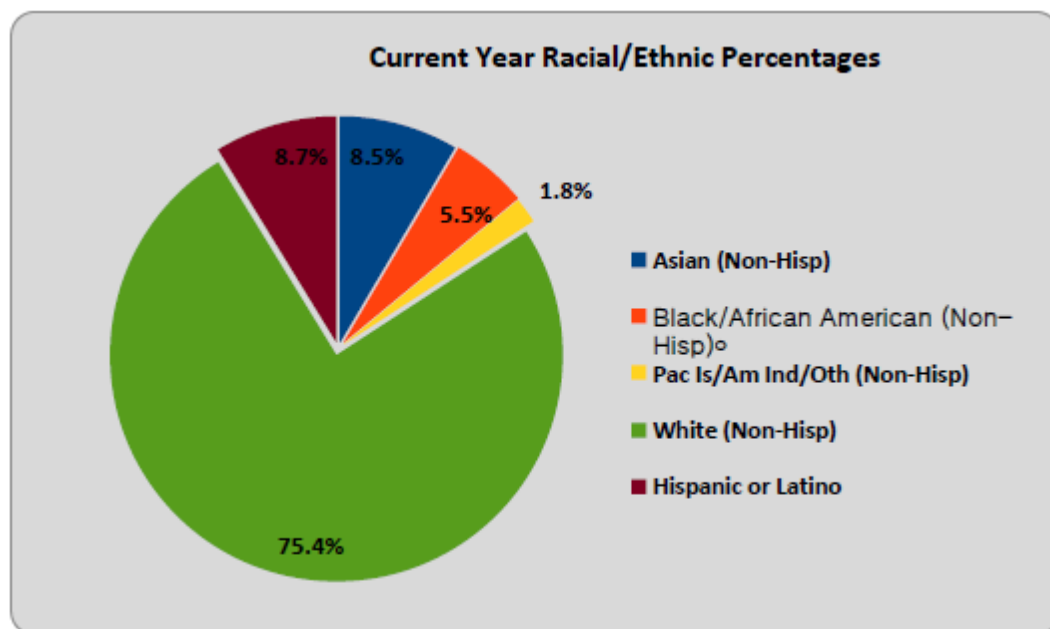
- The following graphs present the adult population within the study area 25 years of age and older by the level of education completed.



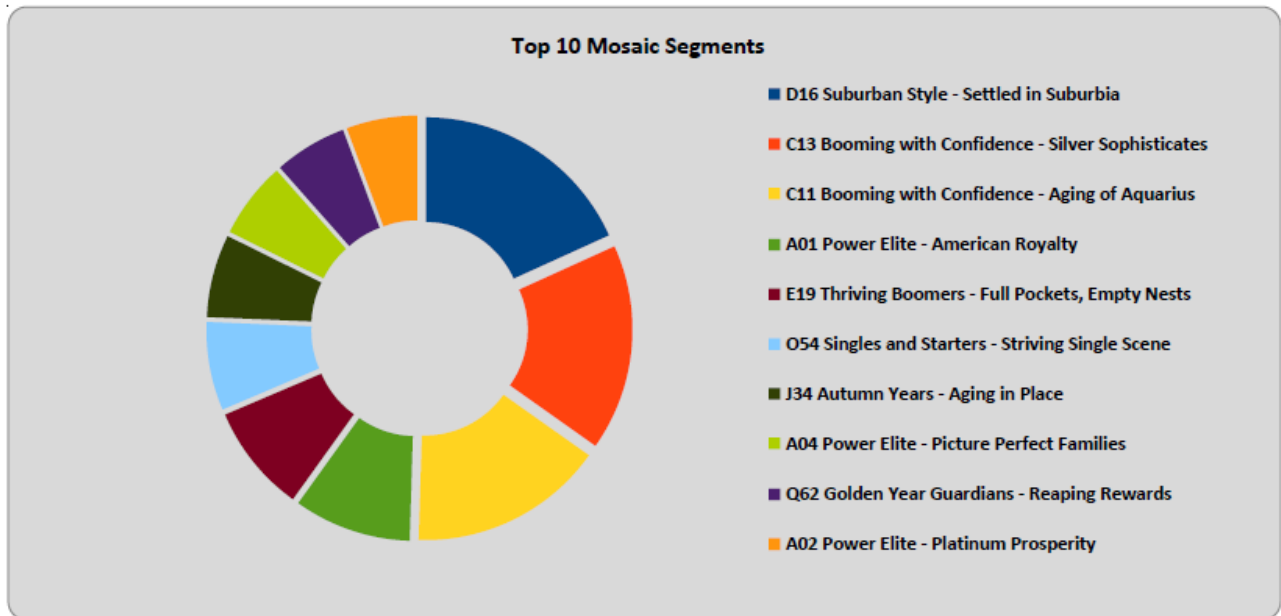
➤ Career Types – Blue Collar vs. White Collar



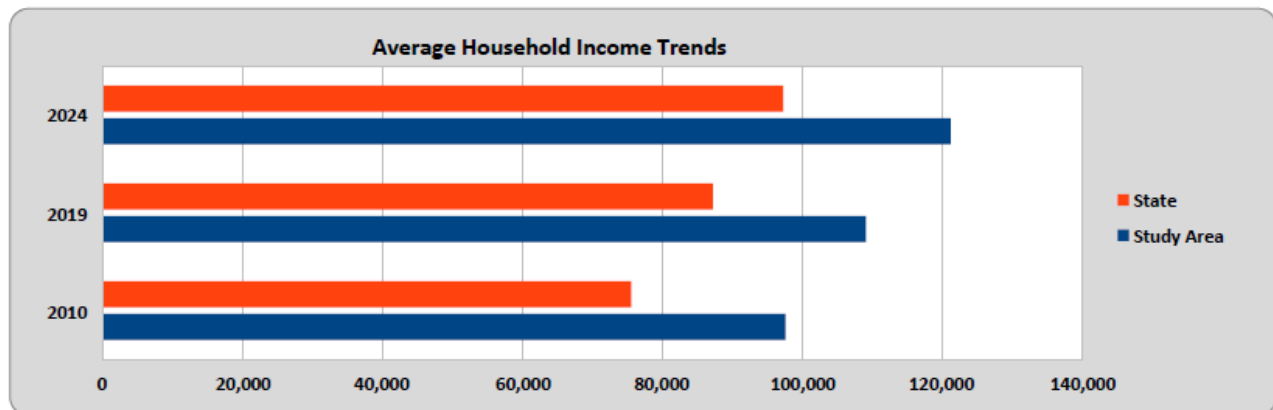
➤ The diversity of a community is shaped by the racial/ethnicity of the people who reside in it but also people's age, income, and education.



➤ Mosaic Lifestyle Types provides insight into the behaviors, attitudes, and preferences of the households within the Study Area. The result is a fuller multidimensional understanding of a community, neighborhood, zip code, or other geography.



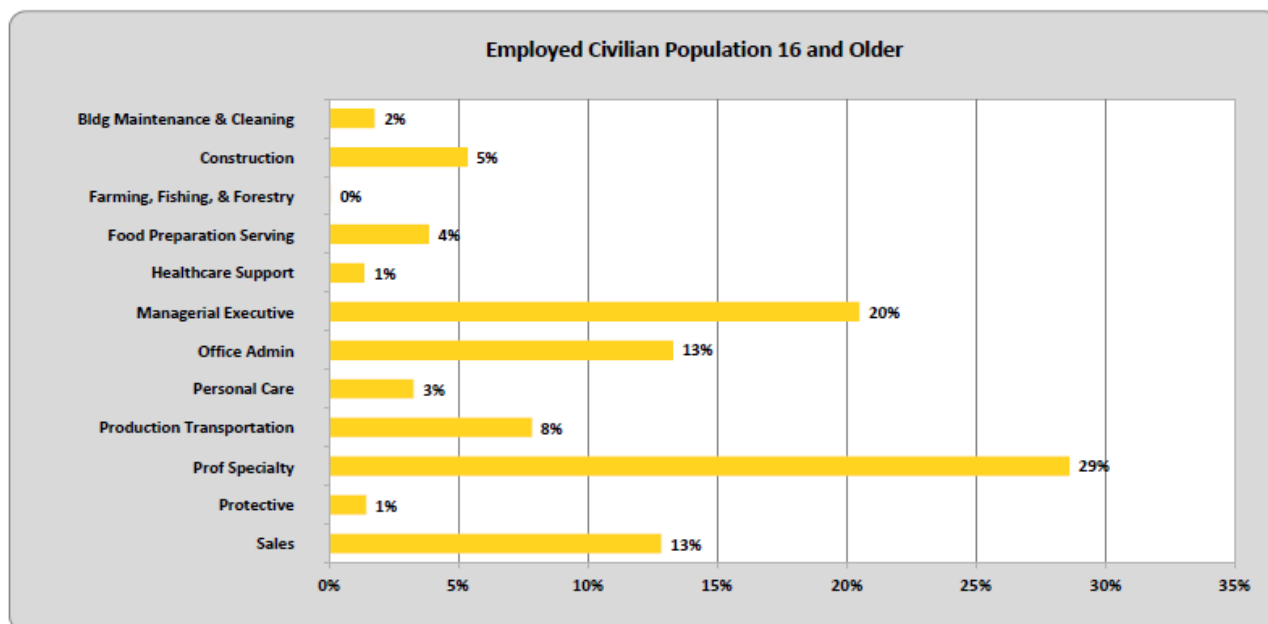
- The availability of financial resources is an indicator of community opportunity or distress.



Income Trends: Households and Families			
	2010	2019	2024
Average Household Income	97,619	109,074	121,200
Median Household Income	73,993	82,750	91,499
Per Capita Income	38,686	43,091	47,861

Some additional highlights from the other MissionInsite reports:

- The top ancestry grouping in your ministry area is Other at 17.0%. The second highest is German at 11.3%
- See below for the Employed Civilian Population by Occupation in 2019.



- Reasons for non-participation in a religious congregation/religious community (of those who do not participate, i.e., those outside of the church)

Reasons for non-participation	Study Area	U.S. Avg.
Demands of raising children	21.6%	19.7%
Moved from community	22.7%	23.1%
No good faith community in area	19.9%	22.4%
No time/less time available	35.8%	33.2%

Personal Reasons for non-participation	Study Area	U.S. Avg.
Don't believe in God	33.3%	32.8%
No longer believe	33.1%	30.6%
Unsure about personal beliefs	36.0%	32.3%
Wasn't relevant to my life	49.7%	48.3%

Reasons about the church for non-participation	Study Area	U.S. Avg.
Religious people too judgmental	63.7%	61.3%
Religion too focused on money	54.9%	55.7%
Don't trust religious leaders	54.1%	52.8%
Don't trust organized religion	53.5%	53.3%
Disillusionment with religion	48.4%	47.3%

(Top five are listed. See the others in the MinistryInsite report.)

- Different communities need different programs and services. Here are some Program or Ministry Preferences deemed important (somewhat/very) in your ministry area.

Program/Min. Preferences deemed important	Study Area	U.S. Avg.
Addiction support groups	34.1%	36.3%
Practical (personal) training seminars	43.5%	44.8%

Daycare/After-School Programs	33.5%	34.7%
Crisis support groups	50.0%	51.7%
Family oriented activities	61.7%	60.0%
Marriage enrichment	47.3%	46.3%
Parenting development	28.9%	38.7%
Personal/family counseling	48.4%	49.9%
Holiday programs/activities	66.1%	64.5%
Seniors/retiree activities	55.9%	54.9%
Youth social activities	48.7%	47.3%
Bible or Scripture study/prayer groups	46.5%	48.0%
Christian education for children	45.8%	44.0%
Contemporary worship services	51.0%	50.6%
Traditional worship services	61.5%	59.4%
Spiritual discussion groups	49.5%	50.3%
Quality Sermons	69.6%	65.5%

- These sample statements express the likely views held by people within the study area compared to the U.S. average. The “No Opinion” percentages are listed in the ReligiousInsite report and could be significant.

Disagree = Strongly or Somewhat Disagree; Agree = Somewhat or Strongly Agree

Beliefs	Study Area Disagree	Study Area Agree	U.S. Avg. Disagree	U.S. Avg. Agree
I'm unsure/undecided about whether a god exists	62.9%	19.7%	60.1%	19.5%
Jesus actually rose from the dead as the Bible teaches.	19.4%	54.3%	19.4%	52.1%
Jesus is the only way for human salvation from sin.	29.8%	45.0%	28.7%	44.1%
Jesus was a good and wise moral teacher but no more.	49.8%	21.7%	46.8%	22.7%
Marriage is a relationship between one man and one woman only.	43.1%	40.4%	40.4%	41.8%
Same-sex marriage must remain legal and protected.	26.8%	52.8%	27.2%	49.4%
Traditional marriage as a social institution is becoming obsolete.	29.2%	46.9%	28.0%	45.6%
Children are adequately taught good moral standards today.	70.6%	12.3%	70.2%	12.2%
I have great hope for the future of my own community (i.e. neighborhood, village, town).	13.2%	57.4%	14.6%	53.0%

- Here are the primary *10 years prior* and *current* Religious Preferences in the study area compared to the U.S. averages.

Religious Preference	Study Area 10 Years Prior	Study Area Current	U.S. Avg. 10 Years Prior	U.S. Avg. Current
Catholic	30.4%	26.6%	24.1%	21.4%
None/No Religious Preference	21.4%	25.1%	26.1%	29.4%
Lutheran	9.6%	8.7%	5.2%	4.6%
Non-denominational/Independent	6.2%	8.2%	6.2%	7.6%
Baptist	6.0%	5.9%	10.3%	9.5%
Methodist	6.7%	5.7%	5.8%	5.1%

- The Faith and Religious Involvement section of MissionInsite's ReligiousInsite report page 24-25, 29 provides the following information on those within your defined study area.

Activity in a Religious Congregation or Community		
Involvement	Study Area	U.S. Average
Projected percentage involved	41.9%	34.7%
Projected percentage NOT involved	58.2%	65.3%

Study Area Comparison 2012 & 2017	2012	2017
Projected percentage involved	44.2%	41.9%
Projected percentage NOT involved	55.8%	58.2%

Surely the Lord has positioned Good Shepherd Lutheran to reach some (if not many) of those who are not presently involved with the good news of forgiveness through Christ!

Level of Participation in Religious Faith (of those who participate)		
Study Area Compared to National Average	Study Area	U.S. Average
Holidays only	2.4%	2.0%
Less than once per month	6.4%	5.4%
Once per month	9.1%	7.8%
Two to three times per month	17.0%	15.7%
Weekly	65.2%	69.1%

This information and additional data from your MissionInsite reports will be useful to you as you consider outreach and nurture strategies during the Mission/Vision Setting phase. Reviewing the MissionInsite reports will help you discover, better serve, and meaningfully engage the people living within reach of your Gospel ministry.

How well does your church membership reflect the percentage of population by ages in your ministry area? As you can see from the chart below, you are above in some categories and below in others. Most significant are the pluses and minuses that are **bold** and underlined. These percentages may suggest that you are "connecting" with some age groups in your community more than with others. As you review this data, keep in mind that all your members are included below.

Percentage of Population by Ages – 2019			
Ages	Your Church	Your Community	Church + or –
0-4	<u>3.8%</u>	<u>5.9%</u>	<u>– 2.1%</u>
5-13	12.4%	10.6%	+ 1.8%
14-17	4.4%	4.7%	– 0.3%
18-21	4.6%	5.3%	– 0.7%
22-24	3.6%	3.8%	– 0.2%
25-29	4.6%	6.0%	– 1.4%
30-34	6.6%	5.2%	+ 1.4%
35-39	5.5%	6.0%	– 0.5%
40-44	<u>10.6%</u>	<u>5.8%</u>	<u>+ 4.8%</u>
45-49	6.4%	6.2%	+ 0.2%
50-54	6.5%	6.9%	– 0.4%
55-59	<u>5.1%</u>	<u>7.8%</u>	<u>– 2.7%</u>
60-64	7.8%	7.8%	0.0%
65-74	10.1%	11.6%	– 1.5%
75-84	6.1%	5.0%	+ 1.1%
85+	1.9%	1.6%	+ 0.3%

How large is your church? The average U.S. protestant church has about 90 persons in attendance per week. About 46% of those who participate in worship attend a church of 100 or fewer attendees (Barna 2016). Based on your average weekly worship attendance (230 in 2019), Good Shepherd is larger than 84% of all U.S. protestant churches and larger than 81% of all WELS churches. Maybe your church is larger than you thought, and with God's blessing, you can accomplish more for the kingdom than you ever imagined.

The following graph helps us to see membership and worship trends during an extended period of time, from 1980 through 2019. Your congregation peaked in 2012 with 627 souls and 480 communicants, and average weekly worship attendance peaked in 2006 at 323.



This chart provides yearly totals for each category indicated (based on received data).

Year	Baptized Members	Confirmed Members	Worship Avg Atnd	Bible Study	Sunday School	LES Enroll.	Pre-School
2009	589	448	265	80	60	77	*19
2010	589	453	275	65	67	75	*21
2011	599	458	261	80	59	74	*18
2012	627	480	260	75	71	71	*23
2013	558	427	245	70	72	62	*24
2014	520	411	236	48	76	61	25
2015	523	421	220	48	48	76	*21
2016	523	429	221	45	15	65	18
2017	474	402	225	50	20	52	27
2018	473	398	238	40	14	50	33
2019	472	397	230	45	15	45	35

**Some of the Preschool numbers above do not match those posted in the WELS Statistical Report*

- Baptized membership has decreased by 117 (-19.9%) from 589 in 2009 to 472 in 2019.
- Confirmed membership has decreased by 51 (-11.4%) from 448 in 2009 to 397 in 2019.
- Worship attendance has decreased by 35 (-13.2%) from 265 in 2009 to 230 in 2019.

Your Church and School Property and Facilities

Good Shepherd constructed your original facility in 1979, so it's now 41 years old. A school facility expansion occurred in 1985, followed by another church/school expansion in 2003 (when you added your preschool), and in 2019 you redecorated the interior of the parsonage for use by a new teacher. These facilities have served you well.

A congregation's property and facilities, located within its community, are tools that either enhance or hinder ministry efforts. Based on responses from your leaders (both men and women), other members, and personal observations during the property/facility tour, the following summary is offered:

- You have a good location at which and from which to pursue the Great Commission (both nurture and outreach).
- You believe your church/school facilities are attractive, maintained, and adequate for what you are currently doing – with the exception of not having a gym or music space for your school.
- There are no big problems, but part of your parking lot will need to be replaced in a year or two (which will be costly).
- Your Preschool could likely expand its enrollment with more space.
- Prior to Covid, Sunday morning Bible study was filling up your fellowship hall. When any space is 80% occupied, you begin to stifle participation.
- The fellowship hall is too small for the size of your congregation.
- Some believe the addition of a gym, music, and lab space for your school would help to draw non-member [and member?] students.
- Additional office and storage space would be helpful.
- Technology is up to date.
- There are no expansions or other big issues currently under consideration.
- Leaders – both men (Ministry Coordinating Council) and women (Women's Ministry) – weighed in on Good Shepherd's property and facilities. Here are some evaluations:
 - *"Our church is beautiful, but our school lacks adequate facilities." "Attractive."*
 - *"Beautifully maintained." "Very clean."*
 - *"Classic, clean, nicely decorated, some fixtures/paint in the school are outdated."*
 - *"Sanctuary lighting seems a little too dark, very dark brick, windows too small."*
 - *"What we have is good, but some areas could be upgraded."*
 - *"7 out of 10." "Functional."*
 - *"Good for our needs, but inadequate for growth."*
 - *"Things are always getting moved and lost because our space is limited."*
 - *"Need more ministry space. The school takes over everything, and sometimes there is no place for other ministry to happen."*
 - *"Restrooms need updating."*

You see positives and are grateful for Good Shepherd's property and facilities. At the same time, you acknowledge that there are negatives, and some of those negatives are

inhibiting some current and potential ministry efforts (e.g., your preschool). It will be important to address your property and facility issues in your new ministry plan.

2. Your Consensus on Carrying Out Ministry

Another significant issue in every congregation preparing to plan future ministry is consensus. How agreed are you on identifying blessings and strengths, needed additions and improvements, and the barriers or obstacles that are keeping you from accomplishing God's will? How agreed are you in your priorities?

Leaders from both the Ministry Coordinating Council (MCC) and Women's Ministry (WM) were asked to identify the **Top Five Major Needs** of the congregation. 9 out of 16 MCC members and 11 out of 12 WM members responded. A total of 24 major needs were identified, and 10 of these were mentioned more than twice. They were: Outreach (11), Member Ministry (10), School Enrollment/Funding/Future/Role (9), Renovations/Expansion (5), Becoming More Welcoming (5), Teens/Young Adult Focus (5), Financial Support (3), Men/Women Working Together (3), Growth/Young Families (3), and Virtual Tools/Online Content/Streaming (3).

At the same time, these leaders were asked to identify **Hot Issues**. A total of 19 hot issues were cited, and leaders mentioned 7 of these issues more than twice. They were: School Enrollment/Funding/Future/Role (9), Member Ministry Scope/Role of Men and Women (8), Growth of the Congregation (4), Dealing with Change (3), Outreach (3), Declining Worship/Bible Class Participation (3), and Priorities of Congregation/School (3).

During the on-site visit we met with your leaders. We discussed some reasons churches stop growing, worked with a SWOT analysis, graded your ministry programs, and gave some initial thought to identifying a 10-year target for Good Shepherd.

When discussing a list of **Reasons Churches Stop Growing**, leaders were asked to add to the list (if they desired), check all that were significant at their church today, and identify the #1 issue their church was facing at this time. The number before each item indicates how many of the 15 leaders (both MCC and WM) identified that item as significant. The list included the following, and note that the leaders added the final 6 items on the list.

- 2 - Mission (struggle with the question, "Why do we exist?")
- 13 - Vision (lack of a sense of purpose, direction, focus, or excitement)
- 5 - Philosophy of Ministry (don't understand WHY we do WHAT we do the WAY we do it)
- 8 - Spiritual Growth (shallow spiritual life, low level of participation in Bible study)
- 5 - Programs (lack of opportunity/variety, not based on real needs)
- 3 - Staff (not sufficient, not properly trained, not fully committed)
- 7 - Organizational Structure (the system doesn't serve the vision)
- 7 - Facilities (not enough space for people, programs, parking, etc.)
- 14 - Culture (failure to adjust to or connect with the community)

- 2 - Conflict (major internal issues with relationships)
- 5 - Confusion on Our Values (added by your leaders)
- 13 - Internal vs. External Focus (added by your leaders)
- 10 - Plug People In (PMM goals) (added by your leaders)
- 11 - Resistance to Positive Change (added by your leaders)
- 8 - Lack of Effective Communication (added by your leaders)
- 12 - Need for Fresh Leadership (added by your leaders)

When asked to identify (from their checked items) the #1 issue faced by the congregation at this time, the most frequently selected items were Vision (5) and Culture (4).

The “How I Feel” survey enabled your consultants to better understand members’ perceptions and compare them with other WELS congregations. A key question on that survey was:

“In general, how do you feel about the programs being carried out by your congregation?” Your members answered:

- ☹ **31.5%** “Not meeting needs or barely passing” (WELS Avg 22%)
- 😊 **68.5%** “Meeting needs or very effective” (WELS Avg 78%)

As you can see, compared to the WELS average, a lower percentage (of your surveyed members) feels your church programs are “*meeting needs or very effective*.” Typically, the lower the level of satisfaction within a congregation the more willing members are to accept change – including *needed* change.

In the chart that follows you see the comparison of how your surveyed members, leaders, pastor, and Academy faculty ranked the purposes of the church (program priorities) among 8 ministry areas. Note that all were asked to provide only their top 3 choices. Composite scores may reflect ties (*) and, in some cases, no responses from some individuals. The actual wording in the survey was: “*I would rank in order of importance (one, two, and three, one being the highest) the following purposes of the church (top three only).*” Responses are from 92 (23.8%) of your 387 communicant members, 20 leaders (both MCC and WM), your pastor, and 6 faculty members.

Purposes of the Church (Program Priorities)

Eight (8) Ministry Areas	Rank Given by Members	Rank Given by Leaders	Rank Given by Pastor	Rank Given by Faculty
Outreach/Evangelism	<u>2</u>	<u>*2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
Spir. Care of Members	8	8		
Adult Spiritual Growth	<u>3</u>	<u>*2</u>	<u>3</u>	6
Nurturing Children	5	6		5
Equipping Members	6	5		4

Worship/Glorify God	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>		3
Regain the Straying	<u>7</u>	<u>7</u>		<u>7</u>
Fellowship/Mutual Love	4	4	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>

Observations:

1. It's not unusual for program priorities to change over the years, depending on challenges being faced and opportunities being pursued.
2. Currently, all are in agreement that Outreach is a high priority.
3. Adult Spiritual Growth was in the top three, except for your faculty.
4. Worship/Glorify God was in the top three, except for your pastor.
5. Regaining the Straying appears to be a low priority at this point, along with Spiritual Care of Members.
6. It's unusual that called workers rank Fellowship/Mutual Love so high. Please ask them why.

In the next chart you see the comparison of how your surveyed members, leaders, pastor, and faculty prioritized the pastor's use of time in 9 ministry areas. Note that all were asked to provide only their top 5 choices. Again, composite scores may reflect ties (*) and, in some cases, no responses from some individuals. The actual wording in the survey was: *"I would rank in order of importance (one, two, three, four and five, one highest) the following ways I believe the pastor's time should be spent (top five only)."*

Prioritizing the Pastor's Time

Nine (9) Ministry Areas	Rank Given by Members	Rank Given by Leaders	Rank Given by Pastor	Rank Given by Faculty
Counseling Members	2	*3		3
Worship Preparation	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
Teaching Children	7	*7		*7
Visiting Unchurched	<u>8</u>	<u>5</u>		<u>5</u>
Visiting Straying	5	9		*7
Teach/Train Adults	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
Administration	<u>9</u>	<u>*7</u>		
Professional Growth	4	*3	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
Leadership/Planning	6	6		6

Observations:

1. There is agreement that Worship Preparation is a priority.
2. Visiting the Unchurched was ranked in the middle of these options by your Leaders and Faculty. Also, Members seem to say that this is about the last thing they want their pastor to do. Why would members suggest this?

3. Teach/Train Adults received a respectable ranking, which is good. This is foundational to having a healthy congregation.
4. Good Shepherd has capable leaders, so it's not surprising that Administration and Leadership/Planning have a low ranking.
5. Again, the Straying appear to be a lower priority. *"What does this mean?"*

Members were asked, *"What one major area do you feel should receive more emphasis in your congregation?"* 89 or 23% of your members responded:

Ranking	%	Ministry Areas
#1	25.8%	Outreach/Evangelism
#2	15.7%	Involving Members in Service
#3	14.6%	Teen Program
#4	13.5%	Reclaiming Inactives
#5	10.1%	Fellowship & Group Life
#6	5.6%	Adult Spiritual Growth
#7	4.5%	Worship
#*8	3.4%	Children's Spiritual Growth
#*8	3.4%	Missions (Home & World)
	3.4%	Other "all of the above"

The following chart provides grades for areas of activity at Good Shepherd as given by leaders.

Grade	Ministry Programs Graded by Your Leaders
A-	Worship – Glorifying God
A-	Christian Education – Children
B+	Stewardship – Use of Financial Resources (\$\$\$) for the kingdom
B	Christian Education – Adults
B	Fellowship – Mutual Love and Comfort
B-	Counseling – Meeting the Needs of Your Members
B-	Stewardship – Use of Time and Talents within the Congregation
B-	Missions – Proclaiming the Gospel Across Our Country and World
B-	Administration – Planning and Leadership
D+	Outreach to Your Community – Personal Evangelism
D+	Youth/Young Adult Ministry
D	Reclaiming Inactives – Strayed and Straying Members
B-	Overall averaged grade

In most congregations, A and B grades identify stronger ministry areas on which to build and C and D grades identify weaker ministry areas in need of more attention. Keep in mind that grades can be deceiving, especially if leaders do not have a clear picture of the congregation's programs or are in denial.

When presented with the survey statement, “*Our ability as a congregation to carry out its existing mission would best be served by...*” 75 members responded as follows:

4.0%	Keeping things the same
78.7%	Making some changes
17.3%	Doing things significantly different
96.0%	<i>Some change or significant change is needed</i>

Typically, the level of angst within a congregation increases in proportion to the desire for change. This is especially true when longer-range ministry planning – Where are we going and how are we going to get there? – is lacking.

Certainly, some serious discussion needs to follow on the basis of the key change questions: (1) What *must never* change? (2) What *may* change? (3) What *must* change? It’s important that you remember and continuously use these questions as you discuss issues. Otherwise, your discussions and decisions will be misguided. Let’s review.

1. What *must never* change? The **message** (i.e., faithfulness to God’s Word) and the **mission** (i.e., pursuing with passion God’s directive to “Go and make disciples”).
2. What *may* change? The **methodology**.
3. What *must* change? Maybe **me**; maybe our **mindset**; but for sure, anything that **hinders** the **message** or the **mission**.

At this point in the process – as you ask, “Where are we today?” – there appears to be some agreement on some perceptions and issues and little agreement on others.

Reaching consensus is a concern. Consensus might be defined as a desired end result of a process that involves as many people as possible in reaching widespread and congenial agreement. Reaching consensus involves: (1) allowing adequate time and opportunity to communicate necessary information, (2) creating an environment where everyone’s input is welcomed, and (3) engaging participants in dialog that leads to better understanding, healthy compromise, and greater unanimity. The process would usually not involve voting, except as a formal affirmation and recording of what has been agreed to previously.

Additional input was gathered from the completed analysis instruments, other materials provided by the congregation, pulse groups comprised of a cross-section of members, and various individuals either prior to or during the on-site visit. The input received helped your consultants more fully comprehend the foundation and opportunities for ministry that the Lord is providing and the challenges that he will help your congregation overcome.

Phase 3 of the Crossroads Consulting process will help you answer critical questions, create a prioritized vision for future ministry, and restructure (as needed) to engage purposefully more members in ministry.

Both leaders and other members have questions about the future of their congregation. For example:

- What is at the heart of our mission on which we *must* focus?
- What are the obstacles that are likely holding us back?
- What will make a significant difference if we do it well?
- What, under God and with his blessing, are we best able to do?
- What is our long-range vision and what do we want to focus on near-term?
- What will our ministry priorities be within the next few years?
- How do we purposefully reach out with the Gospel in our community?
- Do we need to make a major change or shift in how we think or function?
- As we come together around a vision for future ministry, will we need to make staffing adjustments or modify our organizational structure?

You are not alone in asking these types of questions and seeking God-honoring answers through ministry planning. Crossroads typically advises congregations to conduct a comprehensive ministry planning process every 3 to 5 years. Strategically timed planning cycles are needed by most churches because circumstances change and dated ministry plans are either fulfilled or lose energy after just a few years – especially if they are not updated or refreshed on an annual basis.

This current planning cycle will help your congregation to create clarity and unity through the development of an action-oriented ministry plan. Following this analysis phase, during Phase 3 (Mission/Vision Setting), we will identify and unite around the following:

- † Core Values (what you care about the most, your guiding principles)
- † Core Mission (your central focus, cause, passion, why you exist)
- † 10-Year Target (what you are aiming to become, under God and to his glory)
- † Focus Questions (marketing strategy for gathering/growing audiences for the Gospel)
- † 3-Year Picture (what your ministry will look like in three years)
- † 1-Year Plan (key goals you will accomplish, with God's blessing, during the first year)
- † Quarterly Goals (what you will accomplish during each quarter)
- † Communication Plan (communicate effectively, develop consensus, acquire approval)
- † Evaluation Plan (how you will measure progress and hold each other accountable)
- † Remove Barriers by Solving Issues (use the Issues Solving Track – Identify-Discuss-Solve)



A key goal of our planning process is to bring about alignment among all areas of ministry so everyone is moving in the same direction and is focused on working together to accomplish the same unifying vision. This encourages the most faithful and wise stewardship of resources and avoids having conflicting agendas and goals that work against each other.

Following this current planning cycle, anticipate the establishment of an Annual Ministry Planning Event. This event would involve both the newly elected and previous year's leaders and would typically have the following objectives.

- † Grow spiritually in the Word and be unified in pursuing agreed-to ministry goals
- † Facilitate a smooth leadership transition (baton passing from past to current leaders)
- † Review progress on the previous year's ministry plans
- † Expedite ministry by providing helpful training and tools
- † Review and update the congregation's Ministry Plan
- † Develop a timetable for approving the updated Ministry Plan

With our Lord's guidance and blessing, Good Shepherd Lutheran is going to have a clearly articulated, agreed-to, compelling vision for future ministry that answers many questions and makes future decision making much easier. Also, both called and elected leaders and many other members will gain measurable traction in accomplishing their shared ministry goals as all work together as joyful servants of their Savior, compelled by his love.

"We have a lot of ministries, but we're going in our own directions." (Leader)

STRENGTHS ON WHICH TO BUILD

There are two primary reasons to highlight strengths on which to build. The first is that you will live out the joy of knowing, loving, and serving Jesus together when you are thanking God for strengths rather than focusing on weaknesses. Celebrate God's blessings and discover confident optimism for the future as you look less to yourselves and more to your Lord. The second reason is that churches build their future – especially future outreach to the community – on the positives they possess and on things they do well. While shoring up weaknesses may be important, that is secondary to figuring out how better to leverage the strengths God has given you.

1. God's Pure and Powerful Word

By God's unmerited grace, Good Shepherd has been a Christian congregation since 1975 or for 45 years (from the time services were begun). During those years God has preserved among you his truth, blessed you with his Means of Grace, and upheld you with his promises. A total of 5 resident pastors and 21 teachers (including 5 principals) – each unique in personality and gifts – have faithfully brought the truth of God's Word to you.

In both group and individual interviews, you identified the faithful teaching of God's Word as the primary strength of Good Shepherd. Also, many members identify this as the primary reason for their membership here. That's why they joined Good Shepherd; that's why they stay. One member commented, *"We hold strong to the truth of the Bible; it*

permeates through our entire congregation.” No doubt, this is the key strength of your congregation, and if this was the *only* strength of your congregation, you could be confident as you look to the future.

God’s Word is not only verbally inspired and inerrant truth; it is also Spirit-driven power. Where the church faithfully proclaims the Word, the Holy Spirit makes things happen both in the hearts of the saved and the lost – creating and maturing faith, shaping attitudes and priorities, strengthening relationships and commitments. Each of you has been called to faith in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. You are now participating, both as individuals and as a gathering of believers called Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, in God’s worldwide redemptive plan.

Furthermore, the best way to preserve the truth of God’s Word among you is to proclaim that Word passionately and confidently. If this congregation plans its ministry to ensure that more people hear more of God’s Word more often, then the blessings which attend ministry of the Word will be apparent. If leaders model spiritual growth through Bible study, members of Good Shepherd will not take God’s Word – faithfully preached and taught – for granted.

Build on your #1 strength. Grow in faith and Christian living through the Word!

2. Your Core of Committed Members

Another strength is your team of faithful members – including capable lay leaders – who devote large blocks of time, care deeply about their church, and seek to honor the Lord by serving others. When adding up your estimated hours of service by your volunteers, it’s evident that a number of both long-time and newer members love their Lord and use their talents and time unselfishly in his service. Humanly speaking, how could Good Shepherd function or even exist without them?

“I believe our current MCC group is strong and committed to growth.” (Member)

Every congregation, like every other organization, seems to have a smaller core group that is especially active and committed. This cluster of congregants – with their called and elected leaders at the center – typically articulates and promotes a set of beliefs and behaviors that distinguishes their church from others. The beliefs and behaviors of the core group are always determined by their core values. And core values, clearly articulated or not, always drive current ministry and shape future ministry planning.

This is why we encouraged your congregation to walk through a “Clarifying Core Values” process following the analysis. This process is vital to the larger process of long-range ministry planning because a congregation always seems to act primarily on the core values of their core group. Technically, the entire membership is responsible for a

congregation's future, under God. But that future is actually more often determined by the core group, beginning with called and elected leaders.

It will be important that you intentionally train and mentor new volunteers and leaders – first, through spiritual growth to maturity and, secondly, with an intentional process of member involvement in ministry that matches the growing needs of your church. You will benefit from planned programs that help members identify, develop, and use their individual gifts. Also, you will benefit from strategic structures of loving, Christian fellowship that help bring joy to all who serve. These and other components – so crucial to having a healthy congregation – will be addressed in this report and will receive ongoing emphasis throughout your ministry planning process.

3. Your Lutheran Academy

Good Shepherd Lutheran Academy is the most obvious sign of the love, care, and concern your congregation has for children. For 41 years your school has provided Christ-centered education for the children of the congregation, neighboring WELS congregations, and the greater community. Using the Academy for outreach has been a goal since its inception in 1979.

Over the years, the Lord has blessed your Academy with talented and capable teachers, principals, and volunteers. All these dedicated Christians take seriously our Lord's command to let the little children come to him. Please thank those who serve you now in this ministry and regularly ask the Lord to bless their work.

Good Shepherd took an extra step to show love for bringing children to Jesus when you opened your preschool. Today the preschool serves 35 children, ages 3 and 4. The preschool seeks to serve as an outreach arm into the community as well as a feeder for the K-8 program of the Academy.

It is important to note the work of reaching children and families with the good news of Jesus through your Academy is not solely the work of your pastor and Academy staff. This is work the Lord has given to all his people, of all ages, at all times. This does not happen overnight, in a week, month or year. Often this work takes concerted effort over a period of several years. That is why it is important to retain children in the Academy for as long as possible.

"GSLA has great teachers, staff, and academics. We love our school family. You don't [often] get that at public schools." (GSLA parent)

4. Your Emerging PMM Program

We're convinced that the most optimal way for a congregation to engage members in ministry, purposefully and meaningfully, is to have a well-organized and fully functional member ministry program. For that reason, Crossroads has been referring congregations to Lori Lorig for years. We also immediately recommended her services as soon as she launched *Faith Unleashed Consulting*.

We were, therefore, delighted to hear about Lori's activities at Good Shepherd and your emerging Personal Member Ministry (PMM) program. There now needs to be ongoing efforts to involve new and existing members in this vital venture. This will take time and patience, but the rewards – both personal and organizational – will be well worth the effort.

At the same time, we were sorry to hear that some members are resisting this initiative. When we asked why, we heard some may not yet understand what PMM is all about or they have the wrong ideas. Others may simply be set in their ways, not want to do more or anything at all, think they already know their gifts, and some may be resisting because a monetary investment is being made and they may have concerns that the program will not produce positive results. Sadly, the surest way to hurt a program is to undercut it with negative talk. We suggest that members experience PMM before drawing conclusions.

Good Shepherd is blessed to have your PMM program and Coordinator. We encourage all to support and promote both this program and her service among you.

5. Your Organized Women's Ministry

Women's Ministry (WM) includes all women members of Good Shepherd. WM was reorganized several years ago to encourage more women to become involved in the congregation's designated areas of ministry (e.g., worship, outreach, group life).

The organization of WM mirrors that of the congregation, i.e., the Ministry Coordinating Council (MCC), and one purpose of WM is to work in harmony with the MCC. The structure is almost identical between these two leadership groups, and both groups have elections to fill most of their positions. However, the position descriptions of the WM roles (e.g., include cleaning, preparing coffee and meals) are dissimilar to those of the MCC.

"We, as women, work to support the same mission as our congregation and church body." (Women's Ministry Guidelines)

Your consultants are impressed with how well Women's Ministry is organized. For example, the WM Guidelines include clearly-articulated position descriptions for each identified role. The women who fill the elected positions are talented and eager to serve, but there are frustrations. Here are some examples.

- *“In all honesty, I feel the Women’s Ministry is mostly the church catering service. We do most of the meals and cooking/cleaning for every little event and big event. We do outreach that I think is needed, but our involvement with real substance or decision making is limited.”*
- *“It seems nothing happens unless it’s voted on and approved by MCC. The [women] leaders of each role don’t always have the authority to make a decision for the group they lead.”*
- *“I wish I could protect our [WM] officers and coordinators from critical remarks [made] by very few, but very vocal members of our congregation.”*

It’s disconcerting that WM is a notable strength of your congregation, yet these heartfelt frustrations exist.

Increasingly, our congregations are striving to engage women in more meaningful roles and utilize their gifts and abilities more fully in the work of the church – without violating biblical principles. We encourage Good Shepherd to do the same.

After exploring viable options, if keeping your MCC and WM as similar, yet distinct, leadership organizations is deemed to be the best approach going forward, then simply keep your current dual structure. However, if a more practical and productive approach is discovered, then organize and function accordingly.

6. Your Pastor, Faculty, and Support Staff

On both the church and school side of ministry – including called and hired personnel – Good Shepherd is blessed with qualified and dedicated workers. Both leaders and other members spoke highly of your pastor, school and preschool teachers (as well as the classroom helpers/aides), and your office secretary.

Here is a sample of what we read and heard prior to and during our on-site analysis visit.

Pastor

- *“Our pastor has vision and is a leader.”*
- *“He is waking up our church.”*
- *“Our pastor is compassionate.”*
- *“We have a skilled pastor.”*
- *“He is authentic, honest, and relatable; his sermons are from the heart.”*
- *“He is passionate and loves what he does.”*
- *“His sermons are easy to listen to and well understood by a visitor.”*
- *“Pastor does a great job, and he works very hard at it.”*
- *“He has lots of energy, can multi-task, is always smiling, and is fun to be with.”*
- *“Pastor is an excellent fit for our congregation at this time.”*
- *“He is inspiring, kind, gentle, and inviting; at the same time he is strong and will stand up for what is right and biblical.”*

- *“He is so nice; he overflows with the Gospel.”*
- *“You never feel judged by our pastor, no matter what. He is there for you.”*
- *“He pursues professional growth so he has more to offer in service to others.”*
- *“Pastor is a true blessing. He has brought a new spirit to our church that I didn’t think was possible.”*

Faculty/Support Staff

- *“The preschool staff is just incredible, loving, and nurturing.”*
- *“The preschool staff is a #10 out of 10.”*
- *“I recommend the preschool to others; it’s a wonderful program with a great staff.”*
- *“Our principal is friendly and personable, especially with new people.”*
- *“He is organized, loves ministry, and wants to share the Gospel with more families.”*
- *“We have an excellent and experienced [school] staff with a positive reputation.”*
- *“Our school has great teachers, staff, and academics. We love our school family.”*
- *“Our school is Christ-centered, has a knowledgeable and caring staff, and a small atmosphere where no child will fall through the cracks.”*
- *“Our teachers know each student and their individual needs.”*
- *“Our office secretary is very caring and kind, a wonderful first face of the congregation when people enter our building.”*

What a blessing to have such capable and committed servants in their respective roles! On top of that, relationships among your entire staff are also healthy and God-honoring. Continue to keep all of these faithful servants in your prayers, continue to speak well of them, support them enthusiastically, and assist them whenever and wherever possible.

“The evaluations and actions to consider in this report can seem overwhelming. They are intended to be thorough. Please remember that YOU will want to determine how much is valid, what to prioritize, and when to address specific needs and opportunities.” (Your Consultants)

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES TO ADDRESS

“Significant issues” are the earnest concerns that led your congregation to seek consulting assistance, the heartfelt anxieties echoed by members, and the prominent factors identified by this analysis.

1. Your Members’ Spiritual Health

Your hopes and dreams for the future at Good Shepherd depend on the spiritual growth of your adult members. Your decisions, your drive, your determination, your funding, your volunteerism, the health of relationships in your homes and at church, your ability to parent

and give a clear Christian witness all depend on the adult members of your church growing in knowledge, faith, and love through the power of the Spirit as you study, learn, and apply the Word. Spirit-empowered ministry that impacts an increasing number of people cannot and will not happen at your church without ongoing adult spiritual growth.

To underscore the need for ongoing spiritual growth at Good Shepherd, review your members' responses to the following statements from the *"What I Believe"* survey. The first column ("Yes") behind the statements contains the percentages of your surveyed members who either *"strongly agreed"* or *"agreed"* with the statements. The second or final column ("No") contains the percentages of your surveyed members who *"disagreed"* or *"strongly disagreed."* Members completed and returned 71 surveys (18.3% of your 387 communicants). Had all members weighed in, how might the percentages differ?

	Yes	No
1. Everything in the Bible is absolutely true.	99%	1%
2. Determining whether something is right or wrong depends on the situation.	69%	31%
3. God might have created the universe through an elongated evolutionary process.	7%	93%
4. A child is sinful already at birth.	100%	0%
5. In the Lord's Supper, bread and wine are symbols that represent Christ's body and blood.	8%	92%
6. In Baptism God gives babies a new, spiritual life.	99%	1%
7. The main emphasis of the Gospel is on God's rules for right living.	17%	83%
8. Justification is the Bible's word for the truth that God guides us by his Holy Spirit.	49%	51%
9. God is satisfied if a person lives the best life he/she can.	7%	93%
10. The major religions of the world all lead to the same God.	7%	93%
11. A person can be a good Christian even if he/she chooses not to worship at church.	48%	52%
12. Stewardship means that everything belongs to God and we manage things according to his principles.	94%	6%
13. Pastors have a divine directive to equip members to serve others.	84%	16%
14. To become a Christian, a person must decide to ask Jesus to come into his/her heart.	26%	74%
15. When Jesus returns in his glory he will establish a thousand-year reign on the earth.	9%	91%
16. People who don't recognize Jesus as their Savior from sin will spend eternity in hell.	96%	4%

Many of these responses reveal a serious, faith-threatening lack of understanding or possibly even outward denial of biblical truth. These responses, overall, underscore the reality that greater participation in Bible study is needed here. It's essential that all members, starting with your leaders, be exposed to biblical truth – beyond weekly worship – in meaningful ways that involve participants, impart knowledge, and impact lives. Your called workers, leaders, and other members must all own this issue and work together for the benefit of individuals, families, Good Shepherd, your synod, and God's kingdom.

In response to the statement, “*The areas of my faith-life with which my church could better help me are:*” surveyed members responded with the following overall results. You will want to consider this member input when planning your Bible study curriculum.

<u>1</u>	Becoming a more prepared and confident Christian witness
<u>2</u>	Knowing my Bible better
<u>3</u>	Connecting with other Christians in close friendship
<u>4</u>	Feeling close to God
<u>5</u>	Understanding the challenging issues and questions a Christian faces
<u>6</u>	Developing a stronger family
<u>7</u>	Gaining a greater sense of purpose and meaning for my life
<u>8</u>	Coping with hurts and problems
<u>9</u>	Making better decisions
<u>10</u>	Managing my time and money

- Becoming a More Prepared and Confident Christian Witness was ranked #1. This likely demonstrates both an awareness of the Great Commission and anxiety about witnessing.
- Sadly, it’s not unusual that most members least desire help from their church with Making Better Decisions (ranked second to last) and Managing My Time and Money (ranked dead last). At the same time, members frequently cite *lack of member involvement in ministry* and *lack of financial support* among the primary reasons their church is struggling or not reaching its full kingdom potential.
- Review the other rankings. You’ll receive all of the above and more during Bible study. Hopefully, reflecting on these stated desires will cause Bible study participation at Good Shepherd to increase.

Good Shepherd must not give mere lip service to the faithful study of The Holy Bible. Every issue, every concern, every challenge in the church must be addressed from the perspective of Scripture. It’s only through the Word and the power of the Spirit – working in our hearts and lives – that we will know the truth, have hope for the future, and be likeminded in pursuing God’s will.

There is more on adult spiritual growth under the Program Analysis section, but because of the importance of this matter, it needed emphasis here under Significant Issues.

2. Your Challenging Transition

It’s often a challenge for a congregation to adjust to the loss of respected, long-tenured pastors. Pastor David Rutschow served Good Shepherd for 41 years (from 1977-2018), Pastor David Witte served for 9 years (from 1992-2001), and Pastor Matthew Schwartz served for 17 years (from 2001-2018). Your longest-tenured pastors (i.e., Pastors Rutschow and Schwartz) both left during 2018, the same year Pastor Bergemann arrived. That’s a lot of change, and change always requires a period of transition.

The departure of your former pastors and the arrival of your new pastor were not the only changes that required some adjustment. One leader summarized your congregation's challenging transition as follows:

"Good Shepherd started a transition [in 2018] with the departure of two long-term pastors. This happened after other key leaders of the church and school took other positions in other cities. Among the departing members were major donors. Demographic changes have also impacted our congregation. We are trying to cope with all these issues."

Members added the following:

- *"Changes in ministry were a strain. Two recent principal changes, then a pastor took a new call and a pastor retired."*
- *"With the fluctuation of pastors in/out the last two years, plus a newer principal, this equals holes in leadership and direction."*

Well, take heart! You're not the first, nor will you be the last, to experience such a transition. In fact, your current situation is fairly common among our churches. And after facing and maneuvering through this challenge, other challenges will surface (e.g., training and positioning new leaders to replace those who have been faithfully serving for years).

What's important is that you stay focused on your mission and be confident the Lord will continue to guide and bless you, just as he has in the past. Be encouraged by one of your leaders who framed your challenging situation in these hopeful words.

"We had two long-time pastors leave a couple years ago. I think it's been encouraging to see how we've made it through such a change. We've also had to reassess our purpose and move forward with plans, which is even more of an upheaval. But I hope it will also be a revivification for us."

To help you stay focused on your mission, review the following from your church's website. Review, then rejoice that your Good Shepherd – your Savior, Jesus Christ – has called you to know, love, serve, and share him both in and through your congregation.

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me. I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd." - John 10:14-16

The Mission of Good Shepherd is to sustain each of our members in the faith by working together in harmony for the

spiritual growth and health of the congregation and reaching out to bring the gospel of Christ to others.

Seeking the Lost † Feeding the Flock † Serving the Savior

We are committed to...

**Fulfilling the Great Commission
Christian Education
Christ-centered Elementary Education**

We asked, “Are GS’s best days behind or ahead of you and why?” Responses:

“Behind us, if we don’t change.”

“Hopefully, ahead of us, but we have to lean forward into the future.”

“Ahead, because we’re willing to try, and we’re becoming more hopeful.”

“Ahead, because the days ahead of us have to be better.”

“Ahead, because we can change.”

3. Your Academy’s Future

Good Shepherd has supported Christ-centered education for children continuously for 41 years. Four years after holding your first worship service as a congregation, Good Shepherd installed the first teacher for its elementary school. Your love and concern for children is evident in the number of members who volunteer time to serve at the school. Also, you expanded your school to reach younger children by opening your preschool.

Like the majority of WELS schools, Good Shepherd Lutheran Academy has experienced the changes in society. The make-up of the congregation has changed, and the number of school-aged children in the congregation is limited. The pool of Good Shepherd children is much smaller than in previous years. Increasing enrollment means reaching out to the community intentionally and continuously.

Your preschool enjoys an excellent reputation and in recent years has enjoyed an enrollment at capacity. The preschool has even had waiting lists. Like many of our schools, Good Shepherd Lutheran Academy struggles with retaining children as they move from preschool into kindergarten and beyond. The faculty and staff work hard to retain those children so they can spend more time learning to know Jesus. Many efforts are made to reach out to the families with the goal of helping them enjoy a close relationship with Jesus. This is outreach. This is mission work. This is hard, but rewarding, work.

Satan does not want this mission work to succeed. He throws every obstacle imaginable in its way. Those obstacles include the good reputation the public schools enjoy; the number of other private and parochial schools in the area that are larger and offer more programs; the limitations of your current building; and the cost of educating a child. The demographics for your area show that providing Christian education for children is a serious concern, but not as serious as other ministry concerns. No doubt Satan will find and make use of more obstacles in the years to come.

In the face of such obstacles, Good Shepherd may consider eliminating upper grade levels or even closing its school completely. When facing Satan's obstacles, it is vital to remember the purpose of your Academy. You are teaching children (and hopefully their families) to know Jesus as their Savior. Your Academy exists to help decrease the future population of hell. This is work that the Lord will bless in his time, in his way, for the benefit of his people, for as long as your Academy exists.

4. Prioritize Community Outreach

Good Shepherd demonstrates some ambivalence regarding outreach. On one hand, your members, leaders, and pastor all ranked this 2nd in program priorities, and members ranked this #1 in assessing what needs emphasis. On the other hand, both members and your faculty placed "visiting the unchurched" #5 and members placed this #8 out of 9 in prioritizing your pastor's time. Perhaps the assumption is that members rather than your pastor should be doing evangelism. Typically, however, if outreach and evangelism are not a significant element in the pastor's schedule, they won't be for members.

It seems incongruent to make outreach and evangelism a significant priority for the congregation but ask the pastor not to spend time on it. While many of the members your consultants interviewed have an understanding of the Great Commission, Good Shepherd was described by more than one as "inward looking." One leader said: *"We're largely invisible. Few people I talk to have any impression at all of our church."* Another said: *"To Downers Grove, we're just another church because we're not out in the community."*

In the opinion survey, members gave community outreach a 72.4% negative evaluation, and leaders graded "outreach to the community and personal evangelism" a D+. Clearly, there is an awareness of the need for greater emphasis and effort on community outreach. How important the eternal destiny of the searching and straying is to this congregation is less clear. Too often, when leaders and members are preoccupied with institutional needs such as dollars and buildings, or when taking care of members' needs has become the church's purpose, outreach and evangelism get a lot of lip-service.

Prioritizing community outreach is important because the mission of Christ's church requires it. Prioritizing community outreach is important because the spiritual health of a congregation depends on it. Churches that direct a significant amount of effort and

resources toward reaching the lost with the Gospel typically experience an increased level of excitement and involvement. People who want to share their faith grow in their understanding of the faith.

Prioritizing community outreach is not simple. It will mean that the programs of ministry Good Shepherd operates are reevaluated for how open and accessible they are to non-members. It may mean creating programs of ministry primarily to serve people in the community. It means that the way you do worship is attuned to expected guests who don't share your heritage (e.g., more warmth and musical variety, less formality and more explanation). To make guests feel more comfortable, members may need to feel a bit less comfortable.

Prioritizing community outreach comes with a warning. People who've lived their lives apart from Jesus have a way of messing up their lives with their sins. They've created broken homes and addictive habits, promiscuous lifestyles and four-letter vocabularies. They will initially have trouble understanding where Christians are coming from. When the Holy Spirit has brought them to faith in Jesus, they will still need mentoring into the Christian walk.

Most churches would prefer ready-made church members because they require less effort and cause fewer problems. Following Jesus in mission, however, will mean dealing with uncomfortable situations. But that is precisely what the Savior is calling us to do. And the blessing that accompanies his mission enriches the lives of Christians and enlivens the ministry of congregations.

Outreach is an attitude more than a program. It's a *passion* for the lost like that of the Savior. Outreach is a guiding principle that shapes planning and budgeting. Outreach is the sacrifice of self-interest in the interest of saving others. If a congregation doesn't care about people outside their church, those people seldom find their way to that church. But when a congregation intentionally seeks the *really* lost, God has a way of putting them in your path.

One leader once said, "*Members need to be convinced that our brand of Christianity is still saleable.*" If by "our brand of Christianity" is meant a Germanic culture and a Lutheran tradition, the market is probably limited. If by "our brand of Christianity" is meant the Lutheran theology that is honest about sin and unambiguous about grace, then there is no end of prospects. While contemporary American culture has been described as "post-Christian," the effects of sin continue to create broken people desperate for an answer. While tolerance for any and every belief is in vogue, the Gospel is so unique and compelling that people who really hear it will be drawn to it.

The Gospel is not less powerful in our day. It's just that institutional religion is far less appealing in our day. We aren't "selling church." We're giving away forgiveness and eternal life. Truth is timelessly relevant, but churches aren't necessarily relevant. Truth is "saleable." Tradition probably isn't.

5. Staffing to Maintain or Grow

Some members observed...

- *"[All the areas of ministry at GS] really make you realize how much Pastor has to be concerned with, and how much help he needs."*
- *"It's hard for the pastor to focus the time needed on youth programs and worship and do the same for the rest of the church."*
- *"We went from two pastors to one, and I'm not sure we understand the implications of that yet."*

Additionally, your pastor shared, *"At this time I am one pastor at a church of over 450 members. I dream of others being equipped and engaged [in ministry]."* It's no wonder your pastor is dreaming about more of your members joyfully stepping up to serve through your new PMM program. He is stretched thin while attempting to serve Good Shepherd.

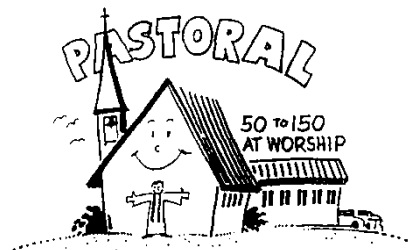


The concern in this section is that a congregation of one numerical size will often be dysfunctional with the leadership structure or relationship style of another numerical-sized church. In other words, as churches experience growth or decline – most accurately measured by average weekly worship – shifts in thinking and behavior are needed by both clergy and laity in order for most churches to remain healthy, optimally functional, and experience growth.

Many churches get stuck at a specific size or begin to decline because they don't know how or don't want to change sizes. Also, leaders attempting transitions between numerical sizes often encounter frustration and failure because they don't fully understand what they seek to become.

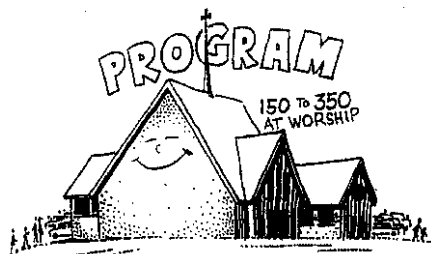


Initially, most churches begin as a Family-Sized Church with worship under 50 per week. There were probably key families – perhaps just one or two – that had significant influence on what would happen, or not. The pastor was primarily a chaplain to the flock and had an intimate relationship with everyone. Good Shepherd is now well beyond this size.



In time, Good Shepherd grew into a Pastoral-Sized Church. Most churches today are this size. The role of the pastor is central, and he still relates to everyone personally. Expectations for pastoral care are high, but when worship attendance nears or exceeds 150 per

week, demands on the pastor become oppressive. He needs to involve many more members in ministry, or else. Perhaps another called worker, full-time or part-time, is needed as well to enable ministries and the church to grow. Good Shepherd was this size in its early years, until 1981 when average attendance grew to 170 per week.



Based on worship average (230 in 2019), Good Shepherd should be functioning like a Program-Sized Church. This size church usually has several staff members (possibly clergy and lay), and lay leadership becomes more vital. Clergy is still central, but the role now must shift to a greater focus on administration (e.g. consensus and trust building, mission/vision and goal-setting, recruiting, motivating, planning, training, coordinating, and evaluating). More programs, including follow-up on visitors and assimilation, are typically launched and managed with the help of members who have specific ministry passions and matching skill sets. It's especially difficult to move from the Pastoral-Sized Church to a Program-Sized Church – for both pastors and people – because shifts in their roles are significant.



The Corporate-Sized Church worships 350 or more (up to 2,000) per week, and Good Shepherd almost became this size in 2006 with an average worship attendance of 323. God-willing, you'll reach this size at some point in the future. This size church usually has multiple staff that is collegial yet diverse in personality and gifts, a senior pastor who is a good communicator and a unity-stability symbol, a top-notch music program, a very sophisticated computer system, intentional and well-organized visitor follow-up and assimilation programs, and lots of people active in a variety of ministry roles. Leaders usually generate energy and momentum as they partner with staff – especially with the senior pastor. Other staff members usually report to the senior pastor.

There is also a Mega-Sized Church (beyond 2,000 in worship per week), but we don't have any of those in the WELS presently.

As you can see from the above church sizes (and as common sense would suggest), staffing becomes an issue as churches change size, and especially when they are blessed with growth. There's only so much called workers can handle, and the intensity of their work typically increases proportionately with rising member expectations or demands for care.

Another reality is that changing church sizes is often an unhappy experience because the values and advantages of the previous size are being lost, and the values and advantages of the next size are still out of reach. Also, congregations that are growing must work to establish the new and larger size firmly – both with attitude adjustments and new patterns

of behavior – or they will often revert to past structures and sizes because of old habits and familiar comfort zones.

When a congregation is understaffed, the pastor has little time or energy for equipping members to serve others, overseeing multiple ministry programs, or proactively starting new ministry efforts appropriate to the ministry context. This often hinders growth and/or hastens decline.

Some past researchers and consultants concluded that if a congregation wants to keep growing it must “staff to grow,” which means having one full-time program staff person in place (or the equivalent in part-time workers) for each 100-150 people at weekly worship. For a majority of your congregation’s history, this is what you did. You wisely had two pastors from 1992-2018. During many of those years, you really had perhaps only 1.5 pastors (or less) as one of your pastors served as the Southeast Wisconsin District President.

Today, because of ever-increasing ministry complexities, many maintain that one full-time program staff person is needed for every 90-100 people at weekly worship. Again, your 2019 average worship attendance was 230. This means Good Shepherd would benefit from having another half-time, or better, another full-time staff person to enable growth – to help manage and expand current ministry options, launch new ministries to reach new people, and prepare more members for works of service (Eph. 4:12).

“At this point with staffing, we’re just trying to maintain what we have.” (Leader)

As is recommended with making other major decisions (e.g., organizational structure, relocation, facilities), Good Shepherd will want to determine the content of your agreed-to vision for future ministry *before* making any staffing decisions. Depending on your vision, possible staffing options for your consideration might include one or more of the following:

- Calling another pastor, who would share preaching and focus his efforts on specific ministry areas
- Calling a staff minister perhaps to focus on family ministry, youth, and outreach (which would be a full plate)
- Engaging many more members in ministry roles that “fit” them, based on how the Lord has shaped each for service in his kingdom (resulting in more members caring for and serving each other and others) Your new PMM program is designed to accomplish this goal, and if members anxiously participate, this program will help dramatically.
- Requesting and receiving a vicar from the seminary (although, mentoring an inexperienced vicar also takes additional time and requires additional effort)
- Calling or hiring one or more part-time workers (possibly raising up people from within your congregation to assume responsibilities for some aspects of ministry)

Other options might be considered as well. Of course, funding is often a factor when adding staff. As you discuss the “money issue,” remember that adding staff costs, but so

does not having adequate staff. When some people and programs fall through the cracks, when some members and visitors stop coming or go elsewhere because their needs are not being met, or when current called workers suffer from fatigue and frustration, the “costs” of being understaffed can run very high. You’ll want to ask, *“Which costs would Good Shepherd prefer to pay?”*

You know you have a faithful and gifted pastor. Many of you shared positive comments about him and the effort he is making in service to his Savior and the members of Good Shepherd. You confirmed what we discovered. Your pastor is willing and trying, but as your only called worker (on the church side of ministry) don’t be surprised if he struggles.

You want a congregation where all ministry areas are well-organized and fully functional – where worship is engaging and enlightening, children and adults alike are students of God’s Word, members are sufficiently cared for and equipped for service, potential prospects are sought out and steadily nurtured, the strayed/straying are reclaimed, and members are eager to support their growing family of believers.

What else will your vision for future ministry include? Answering this question will help you determine how best to staff your congregation.

Your current planning process will provide an opportunity to address these and other issues prayerfully and purposefully.



Seeking the Lost ♦ Feeding the Flock ♦ Serving the Savior

MINISTRY PROGRAMS

In this section your current ministry efforts – what you are now doing to win the lost for Christ and equip the saved to serve – are evaluated. Primarily this involves seeing your congregation's ministries through your eyes. Findings are shared, commendations and concerns are offered, and some actions to consider are suggested.

1. Worship

We know from Jesus' own words that *"true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks"* (John 4:23). We value Lutheran worship – which faithfully focuses on Christ, Law and Gospel, and Word and sacrament – because it holds God's saving truth about sin and grace before all who are present and invites their Spirit-engendered response of prayer and praise.

Providing a meaningful worship experience is a complex issue and an ongoing challenge today because people have diverse opinions and expectations. It involves both worship leaders and worship participants. It requires honest communication and loving sensitivity. As you read through this analysis of worship, be aware that your congregation will explore this issue more fully as you design your vision for worship in the next phase of the Crossroads Consulting ministry planning process.

Findings – Facts and Figures

- The program grade given by leaders to "Worship – Glorifying God" was A-.
- Responding to the question, "What one major area do you feel should receive more emphasis in our congregation?" members ranked "Worship" #7 out of 9.
- Worship was ranked in the top 3 program priorities by members, leaders, and faculty, and these groups, plus the pastor, indicated that Worship Preparation is a high priority for their pastor's use of time.
- Your average attendance in 2019 was 230, which was 48.7% of your soul membership. That means about 242 (54.3%) of your members were not present, on average, for weekly worship. Sadly, the synod worship attendance average was 41% in 2019 and your Chicago Conference average was 40%.
- You indicated about your current weekly worship schedule:

Day	Time	Avg Attnd	Members	Seating Filled	Parking Filled
Saturday	5:30 pm	30	6.4%	21%	20%
Sunday	8:00 am	95	20.1%	65%	50%
Sunday	10:30 am	105	22.2%	72%	60%

- Your worship facility comfortably seats about 145 people and your parking lot accommodates 120 vehicles, including 0 reserved guest and 5 handicap spaces. You indicated that your land site comprises about 5 acres, including two houses.

- Approximately 2% of your members live within 1 mile, 2% within 1-3 miles, 40% within 3-5 miles, and 56% live 5 or more miles from your church.
- 3 members are currently served as shut-ins in their homes, and 2 members are residents of care centers or other institutions.
- 75.8% of your surveyed members indicated that worship for them was *“usually helpful or consistently inspiring”* (WELS average 75%). At the same time, 24.2% indicated that worship for them was *“dull, uninteresting, or routine”* (WELS average 25%).
- Members were asked to respond to the statement, *“I would prefer that music in worship would be...”* Responses:

12.0% *“traditional Lutheran hymns and liturgical responses.”*

81.3% *“a blend of the traditional and easy-to-sing spiritual songs.”*

6.7% *“up-beat and easy-to-sing spiritual songs.”*

- Members expressed their level of satisfaction regarding several aspects of worship (using a 1 to 10 scale). The averages of the 69 responses are provided below.

☹ Dissatisfied	↔	Satisfied ☺
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		

1. Worship is well planned (i.e., clearly structured around a meaningful theme). 9.45

2. Worship has adequate variety (which helps to engage those who are present). 8.61

3. Music selections and songs are spiritually enriching. 8.49

4. Sermons appropriately apply Law and Gospel to our hearts and lives. 9.35

5. Our weekly worship schedule is as it should be in this community. 9.03

- Generally speaking, based on their comments about worship, members...
 - ◆ appreciate the pastor’s sermons and children’s messages.
 - ◆ prefer and appreciate variety during worship, although there is some tension regarding worship/music style. (E.g., *“I prefer variety and maybe a bit more upbeat. Loved the guitar, piano, and other instruments.” “There are too many services with instruments/singing, and the congregation not participating.”*)
 - ◆ miss not being able to gather for worship, Bible study, and fellowship because of the Covid pandemic.
- We heard that you have an outstanding Worship Coordinator who has a deep understanding of the mission of the church and a Gospel-motivated spirit. She has helped to identify and coordinate an increase of musical gifts within the past year.
- Here are some first impressions while experiencing worship with you on the weekend of the on-site analysis.

Left a positive impression:

- ◆ Website (first contact and impression)
- ◆ Appearance of property and facility
- ◆ Parking lot (location, condition, open spaces, handicapped spaces)
- ◆ Accessibility (for walkers, wheelchairs)

- ◆ Welcome by pastor (worship info, warm and friendly)
- ◆ Clearly stated focus of worship and easy to follow path of worship
- ◆ Your pastor's voice while singing the psalm (wonderful!)
- ◆ Animated and engaging children's message
- ◆ Pastor's message (Law/Gospel balance, helpful illustrations/stories/applications)
- ◆ The explanation regarding your communion practice (in sample bulletins)
- ◆ Lighting okay but could be a bit brighter
- ◆ Sound level was great
- ◆ Tempo of singing/music and flow of worship
- ◆ Announcements, invitations

Caused discomfort or concern:

- ◆ No "Guest Parking" spaces
 - ◆ Only 1 small restroom adjacent to the narthex (with others located down the hallways).
 - ◆ Lack some directional signs (perpendicular signs would be helpful on your restrooms with directional signs to the additional restrooms)
 - ◆ No screens (which makes worship more user-friendly, esp. for guests and young families)
 - ◆ No staffed child care during worship [The preschool playroom has a monitor, but there is no place for parents to sit.]
- When asked, *"What is the average number of guests in worship per month?"* the answer given was *"115, they're mostly friends, extended family visiting from out of town, non-member school parents (on days children sing), and new residents."*
- A total of only 5 guest surveys were returned. Responses of your worship guests:
1. What expectations or concerns did you have as you anticipated visiting this church?
Responses: *"To worship God in a warm church with other Christian brothers and sisters."* *"I hoped for entertaining [engaging?] worship to hold our children's attention."*
 2. Arriving
 - 100% Parking was convenient
 - 0% Found my way okay
 - 0% Was unsure of where to park and where to go
 3. Initial Contacts
 - 100% Was greeted warmly and offered assistance
 - 0% People seemed nice and would probably have helped if I had asked
 - 0% Was largely ignored
 4. Worship
 - 100% Was easy to follow
 - 0% Some rough spots, but I participated fairly comfortably
 - 0% Confusing
 5. Worship Experience
 - 80% Spiritually uplifting
 - 20% Made me think

0% Left me cold

6. Sermon (Pastor's Message)

100% Connected the Bible with my life meaningfully

0% Got something out of it, but parts missed me

0% Pretty boring over-all

7. After Worship

40% People, announcements, and literature made me feel informed and at home

60% Got a sense of what this church is all about

0% Didn't get the impression people cared if I came back

8. My Overall Experience

100% Great experience. I would come back.

0% Worthwhile experience. I would think about coming back.

0% Negative experience. I will not be back.

0% I am not sure how I felt about the experience.

9. Your Religious Situation

80% Member of another Lutheran church

0% Member of another Christian church

20% Christian, but not a member of a church at this time

0% Just checking out the Christian faith

10. Suggestions you would offer to make this church more guest friendly.

Responses: *"Thank you!" "Great as is, even with Covid. Can't wait to see it after."*

"We are visiting and anticipate becoming members after Covid-19 abates. Came here after watching televised service with excellent sermon." (Worship Guest)

Actions to Consider

- Because a significant percentage of your surveyed members (81.3%) indicated a preference for a mixture of traditional and more modern music during worship, continue to provide the variety the majority desires.
- Make surveying your first-time guests a regular practice. Use their input to engage them in fruitful conversations about their reasons for visiting, specific ministries that might interest them and, of course, their Savior. What better way to show loving concern for those who visit your church than to ask them, *"How can we best serve you as we serve our Savior?"* Guests are often extra kind when asked to comment on their worship experiences, so give careful thought to whatever discomfort they disclose.
- You have no reserved guest parking spaces that say: *"We were expecting you. Park here and come on in!"* Churches that strive to be "guest friendly" often reserve 5% to 10% of their parking spaces for their guests. Where might you reserve some?

- Even though most of your parents probably prefer to have their children with them during worship, consider providing staffed child care. This would invite greater participation of younger parents and remove a barrier that might turn some guests away. Offering child care during Bible study and BIC might also be appreciated.
- As some are already doing, make guests your #1 priority both before and after worship. Talk with those you do not yet know before talking with your friends. Simply say, *“Hi, my name is... I’m not sure I know your name.”* Then include your new acquaintances (current members or not) in conversations as you join your friends for fellowship.
- Remember that guests are 75% more likely to return if contacted personally within 24 hours after they provide their name and contact information. Ensure that (1) timely visits are made, (2) both your pastor and lay persons are involved with follow up, and (3) appropriate materials and training are provided.
- Have elected leaders wear name badges on Sunday morning so they are easily identified and those they serve are more inclined to ask questions or offer suggestions. [You’ll find these badges, which you already have, in the coat room. ☺]
- Screens, located in the areas of your hymn boards, would be a great way to enhance the worship experience of your members and guests.

Research has demonstrated that it takes 7 positives to overcome 1 negative. That’s why Good Shepherd will want to work hard on creating a warm and welcoming environment for worship regulars and, especially, your worship guests. First impressions are particularly significant to the newcomer, and demonstrated hospitality opens people’s hearts. Little positive details (parking lot in good condition, uncluttered use of space, pleasant smells and smiles, good lighting, etc.) tend to add up and create a desire within people to return. Then we have another opportunity to share God’s truth with them.

There are typically differences of opinion regarding worship among members of our congregations, but we are unified when (during our discussions) we stay biblically grounded and focus on how best to worship our Lord *“in the Spirit and in truth”* (John 4:24). Following their honest and loving discussions, some WELS congregations have decided to offer just one type of worship experience. Others have opted to offer more than one option. Overall, most have been moving toward providing a “blended” worship experience. Keep in mind that, from generation to generation, worship practices must be guided by the twin criteria of *reverence* (focusing on God and his grace and emphasizing Word and Sacrament) and *relevance* (addressing real life issues and involving people in ways they find meaningful).

2. Adult Discipleship

Discipleship is all about being a follower of Jesus and growing in knowledge (head), in love (heart), and in service (hands) so that we think, speak, and live more like Jesus every day. *“Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”* (2 Peter 3:18) is inspired encouragement for all. Discipleship happens, by the power of the Spirit, when followers of Jesus keep growing through fervent and faithful use of his Word.

Findings – Facts and Figures

- The program grade given by leaders to “Christian Education – Adults” was B.
- Responding to the question, “*What one major area do you feel should receive more emphasis in our congregation?*” members ranked “Adult Spiritual Growth” #6 out of 9.
- You pastor, leaders, and other members ranked Adult Spiritual Growth #2 or #3 in program priority among 8 options. That’s a good thing because being in God’s Word is foundational to having a healthy congregation.
- Within the past 11 years, Bible study participation (including both teens and adults) decreased by 54 people or 54.5% (from 99 in 2008 to 45 in 2019).
- During 2019, Good Shepherd offered multiple Bible study options for your 397 communicants – for which we commend you.

Class/Description	Location	Presenter	Day/Time	Avg Attnd
Morning Bible study	Fellowship Hall	Pastor	Sun., 9:30 am	45
Weekly Teen	Narthex	Lay	Sun., 9:30 am	5
Weekly Women’s	Fellowship Hall	Lay	Wed., 9:00 am	12
Monthly Men’s	Restaurant	Pastor	Sat., 8:00 am	10
Small Group (spring/fall)	Homes	Lay	Varies	32

- Your *Connecting Through Christ* (CTC) initiative offers fellowship and growth in Christ as groups of 8-10 adults gather at homes (weekly, for two months in spring and fall) to discuss a recent sermon and share experiences while having fun along the way. Over 100 members have participated in a group during the past several years.
- When asked, “*How do you feel about our congregation’s program of spiritual growth for adults?*” 31.9% indicated “*not meeting needs or barely passing,*” (WELS average 16%) and 68.1% responded, “*Meeting needs or very effective*” (WELS average 84%).
- 80 adults and teens out of 397 (20%) participate in your weekly Bible classes. That means about 317 confirmed members (on average) do not participate in your scheduled Bible studies.
- Compare these 2019 percentages of confirmed members participating weekly in Bible study: your congregation 20%; your conference 15%; your synod 15%. The synodical average is considered by many to be shockingly low.
- When asked if Good Shepherd has specific goals and strategies for involving members in spiritual growth opportunities, you indicated, “*Yes, our Personal Member Ministry Program will help guide interested members to spiritual growth service opportunities.*”
- When asked, “*Are all of your elected leaders involved in weekly Bible study?*” you responded, “*No, only 10 out of 20 or 50% are involved.*”
- Your fellowship hall is nearing capacity for Sunday morning Bible study. Keep in mind that when any space is 80% full, sociologically speaking, some participants will drop off in their attendance or disappear entirely.

<p><i>“We need to engage more people, especially leaders, in Bible study. The Holy Spirit working through the Word is what will motivate us to pursue our vision.”</i></p>

Actions to Consider

- Your leaders that participate in Bible studies are commended. All your leaders are encouraged to lead by example, regularly attending studies that are offered. Leaders, when appropriately gifted and prepared, consider facilitating Bible studies as well.
- One reason it's such a struggle to get people who attend worship also to attend Bible study is that this is contrary to their experience. Their learned practice is that "church" is a one-hour event on Sunday morning, and the other hours of the morning, also based on past experience, have established patterns as well (sleep in, watch political news analysis on TV, out for breakfast, etc.). Help people see, lovingly and gradually, that Bible study at church is a good thing – good for growing in faith and Christian living, building a strong church family, witnessing, and building supportive and caring relationships. Both worship and Bible study are good for us, and benefiting from both is best.
- There are things Good Shepherd could do to increase Bible study participation.
 - ◆ Find out why almost one third of your surveyed members indicated that your program for adult spiritual growth was *"not meeting needs or barely passing."*
 - ◆ When offering Bible studies, communicate the specific purpose for each as you promote participation so everybody will know how they can expect to benefit.
 - ◆ Encourage members to register for classes (on paper, online, or both) before Bible classes begin, which allows them prayerfully to commit to a study of their choice.
 - ◆ Personally invite people. The best recruiters are often those who already participate. Have them invite their friends, relatives, etc.
 - ◆ Communicate how helpful and fun Bible studies are by showing video clips.
 - ◆ Help newcomers know they will not be made to feel uncomfortable (e.g., you never call on people to read or answer challenging questions.) so their concerns/fears are alleviated.
 - ◆ Begin tracking attendance for all of your Bible classes. A simple sign-in sheet, listing the names of all who have preregistered, with room for other names, will allow your pastor/leaders to monitor and promote the spiritual welfare of all. If the number of people in Bible class is a helpful gauge of the congregation's spiritual health (and it is), then regularly "reviewing the names and numbers" is important.
 - ◆ Determine which topics or issues might most interest people in your community, then publicize and offer a short Bible study series in an off-site location.
 - ◆ Evaluate and enhance/improve all your Bible study options annually.
 - ◆ Start new Bible studies, which is the best way to draw new/more people.
 - ◆ Set specific goals for involving more members in Bible study opportunities.
 - ◆ Brainstorm other strategies and add to this list.

Adult spiritual growth must be one of your most significant ministry programs in order for positive advances in ministry to occur. When a congregation gives adult discipleship – growing as a follower of Jesus – high priority, other ministry programs benefit as a result. Involving members in the study of Scripture, especially your adult members, is a key to accomplishing your congregation's mission and vision.

3. Outreach and Evangelism

Outreach is what we do to establish contact with as many people as possible because our Savior said “*go and make disciples*” (Matthew 28:19), and we know he “*wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth*” (1 Timothy 2:4). Good examples of establishing contact with people in your community would be your providing Welcome Wagon info, delivering Bread of Life loaves, last fall’s Trunk or Treat, and your website.

Through outreach efforts we let people know where we are, who we are, and what we offer. We create awareness on how much we care about our neighbors, and we pray that our initial contacts lead to additional opportunities through which we share the Word with people and the Holy Spirit strengthens their faith or brings them into God’s family.

Be aware that churches today seldom have much spiritual impact within their communities unless both called and elected leaders and the inner core of the most active members feel strongly motivated toward Great Commission activities. The point: Simply *believing* in evangelistic outreach and *wanting* it to happen does not equal *enthusiastically doing it*.

Findings – Facts and Figures

- The program grade given by leaders to “Outreach to Your Community – Personal Evangelism” was D+, and “Missions – Proclaiming the Gospel across Our Country and World” was given the grade B-.
- Responding to the question, “*What one major area do you feel should receive more emphasis in our congregation?*” from those listed, members ranked “Evangelism” #1.
- When asked to provide approximate percentages of current members in reference to their spiritual history, you shared the following.
 - ◆ 55% Life-Long WELS
 - ◆ 20% From Other Lutheran Churches
 - ◆ 20% From Other Christian Churches
 - ◆ 5% Came to Know Jesus through Our Church
- You estimated that the approximate percentages of your adult confirmands in the past 5 years (7, an average of 1.4 per year) were:
 - ◆ 100% Relatives or friends of members
 - ◆ 0% Unconnected strangers visiting or gained through outreach efforts
- When asked, “*What potential does our congregation have for growth?*” 25% of your members responded, “*poor or limited*” (WELS average 24%) and 75% replied “*good or excellent*” (WELS average 76%).
- In response to the question, “*How do you feel about the evangelism efforts of our congregation in the community?*” 72.4% of the surveyed members indicated, “*not meeting needs or barely passing*” (WELS average 37%) and 27.6% “*meeting needs or very effective*” (WELS average 63%).

- When presented with the statement, *“If given the opportunity to participate in training for outreach ministry, I would...”* 60.7% selected, *“run the other way or be cautiously interested”* (WELS average 61%) and 39.3% (35 members out of 89) checked, *“be available if asked or would sign up”* (WELS average 39%).
- You indicated that the following are in place:
 - ◆ Recent (2020) improvements to your online streaming for worship
 - ◆ An evangelism/outreach committee (*“2 people serve on this group”*)
 - ◆ A lay director for evangelism efforts (Greg Busse)
 - ◆ Consistent follow-up strategy for those who visit worship (*“Bread of Life” coordinator, Pastor or Principal, depending on visitor”*)
 - ◆ An active prospect list (23 families/households; 10% Good, 20% Fair, 70% Tough; primarily School/VBS/Christmas for Kids parents and church visitors; Shepherding Coordinator or Pastor “owns” and “works” the list.)
 - ◆ A process/strategy for nurturing prospects (*“For any church visitor, a visit by member if address is given; for school parents, follow up by pastor/principal; for visitors indicating membership interest, follow up by pastor; for VBS/Christmas for Kids, no formal plan”*)
 - ◆ A method for discovering/contacting new people who move into the area (*“Welcome Wagon info”*)
 - ◆ Multiple Bible Information Classes each year, *“whenever prospective members indicate a desire to attend”*
 - ◆ Sufficient off-site road signs to clearly mark your location
 - ◆ A definite amount budgeted for evangelism (*“\$8,600 for FY 2019/20”*)
 - ◆ A budget sufficient to carry out an effective, well-rounded program of outreach

At the same time, you do not have the following:

- ◆ A defined system in place for tracking and following up with your guests
 - ◆ An ever-increasing presence on social media
 - ◆ Members asked to submit names for invitation to the BIC
 - ◆ A community survey/canvass within the past 2 years
 - ◆ Effective publicity for your ministry in the community
 - ◆ A written plan developed annually with specific goals and objectives
- Rejoice in this comment by a new member: *“When we came, we felt welcomed; we connected right away with the pastor; GS was welcoming as we would ever want.”*
 - When asked, *“What is the greatest strength and weakness of your congregation’s outreach program?”* one perspective was: *“Strength: Website and streaming worship services, usage is steadily increasing; Weakness: community outreach.”*
 - What about the reputation of your congregation in the community? We asked your men and women leaders in one of the analysis instruments, *“How do you think people in your community would describe your congregation?”*
Examples of neutral or positive responses: *“Friendly, especially because our principal, faculty, and school families are very engaging.” “Hopefully friendly and welcoming.” “If people are familiar with the Bible and come in the door, they find us friendly and inviting*

*with a sound biblical message.” “They have a Christian school and preschool.”
“Friendly and committed to discipleship.” “Traditional.” “Conservative.”*

Other responses: *“To DG, we’re just another church because we’re not out in the community.” “Where’s that? Oh, I’m not aware of that congregation.” “We’re largely invisible. Few people I talk to have any impression at all of our church.” “Hidden.” “Unknown.” “Not well known.” “They know where we are (maybe), but don’t really know much about us.” “We have very few members from DG.” “Not always the most welcoming.” “Insular.” “Strict and kind of boring.” “Some who are not familiar with [Confessional] Lutherans think we are a cult.” “Unenthusiastic, stoic.” “Insider’s club.” “Nothing that would stand out to make them come back.”*

“We need direction, planning, leadership, and more people involved to make progress on Outreach, in addition to being more welcoming to visitors.” (Leader)

Actions to Consider

- Carefully study the MissionInsite reports. They will provide a variety of insights that will help you to shape your outreach/evangelism efforts.
- Prioritize growing your prospect list and faithfully “farm” it. A congregation your size in your setting might aim to have 100 to 150 households on your prospect list. In addition to gathering names and contact info from worship guests, ask all members for names of unchurched people they know in your area. Strategize with them on how best to reach each prospect. Watch for potential prospects at baptisms, weddings, funerals, and other church events. To adequately “farm” your growing list, design and implement a prospect nurture strategy that involves outreach-minded members who could initiate timely contacts with prospects – including emails, texts, phone calls, and visits – and hand off to your pastor those who are eager to have him visit and/or join his instruction class.
- As you develop outreach strategies, focus primarily on two groups of people who are likely to be most receptive: (1) people in transition (e.g., new residents, planning to marry, newborn child, new job, changing schools), and (2) people under stress (e.g., divorce, terminal illness or death of a loved one, financial problems, unemployment, retiring, marriage and family challenges). Brainstorm opportunities for outreach in your community where you can demonstrate Christian love and share God’s uplifting promises. Could some mission-hearted members help to launch and direct some new initiatives?
- Every congregation, over time, develops a reputation that either positively or negatively influences people’s receptivity to outreach efforts. Ask not only, *“What can’t we do because of our biblical fellowship principles?”* but also, *“What can we do?”* How can you serve people in your community? Ask your lead consultant for a list of community servant evangelism ideas. Brainstorm other options. Solicit suggestions from some of your community leaders.
- Become familiar with and utilize the components of the WELS Congregational Evangelism Kit, which includes video-based training for evangelism leaders.

- Contact (and possibly engage) Praise and Proclaim Ministries (PPM), which assists congregations in three ways: (1) training Christians to proclaim the Gospel confidently and joyfully, (2) providing a well-organized opportunity for members to put their training into action through a door-to-door outreach initiative, and (3) helping congregations take advantage of the training members receive. PPM will help you enhance what you are already doing, discover new outreach methods and opportunities, and provide prospect follow-up training. Email: info@praiseandproclaim.com
- Follow respected practices and canvass selected areas (door-to-door) annually. Because people move in and out and life situations change, revisit selected areas after a few years. Keep adding to your prospect list!
- Another strategy for reaching souls for Christ is to develop some special events – on site and in the community – to which members can invite their friends and at which those friends can experience Christian love and listen to Christian truth. Begin thinking now about what those special events might be.
- Explore the possibility of launching a Jesus Cares ministry. Jesus Cares Ministries (JCM) will assist you in developing an outreach program that serves people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. To learn more visit www.tlha.org.
- Most (and maybe all) congregations should ensure that their pastors invest at least as much of their discretionary time with prospects as they do with existing members and have members-in-training accompany them when they visit with prospects. Why? Because (1) this prioritizes outreach ministry, (2) pastors are uniquely qualified to mentor members in developing an outreach mindset and lifestyle, and (3) pastors need to be known and visible in their communities.
- Move forward with those who indicated they are willing to participate in training for outreach ministry by providing additional opportunities. Training needs to be both biblical and practical. Contact the WELS Commission on Evangelism office for useful advice and updated resources.
- As a guiding principle, strive to develop every program and group in your church to engage unchurched people and/or encourage Christians in their personal witness. The goal is to have every person within the congregation be outreach minded and equipped to share the saving truth about sin and grace. *“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have”* (1 Peter 3:15). The DVD titled *Confidently Sharing Jesus with Friends* (NPH) will help.
- Fifty years of research implies that when members double or triple the number of worship invitations they extend and provide worship guests with a friendly and welcoming hospitality, attendance and membership increase. Without personal invitations from members, only one-half as many new people visit and join a congregation. On average about 15% (1 out of 7) of unchurched people respond to invitations, and they are most likely to respond when something is missing, broken, or new in their life. Request from Crossroads “52 Ideas for Inviting Someone to Church.” Invite, invite, invite!

“We’re drowning in a sea of people in this community. Who knows what we could do – what God could do through us!” (Leader)

You’ll be thinking more about outreach strategies in the next phase of your planning process. But don’t wait to witness! Expose as many people as possible to God’s powerful Word as you focus on growing the largest audience possible for the Gospel.

4. Reclaiming the Strayed and Straying

It’s best to use the more positive terms “strayed” (to refer to those who seldom, if ever, show up at church anymore) and “straying” (to refer to those who are in the process of wandering) instead of “delinquents” or other negative terms that tend to carry demeaning connotations. The point is that the terminology we assign to these members often says a lot about how we feel. We aspire to have the attitude of our Savior when we work with those who wander away and put themselves in greater spiritual danger. (See Luke 15:3-7, The Lost Sheep.)

Findings – Facts and Figures

- The program grade given by leaders to “Reclaiming Inactives – Strayed and Straying Members” was D (lowest grade).
- Responding to the question, “*What one major area do you feel should receive more emphasis in our congregation?*” members ranked “Reclaiming Inactives” #4 out of 9.
- Based on the information you provided regarding your 397 communicant members, you identified 130 or 33% as inactive. When asked for the criteria by which you determine when members are inactive, you indicated: “*6 months without attending a service. (however, numbers include students or adult children away from home, members who have moved and not yet transferred, and some who do not sign the Friendship Register.*” An uninterrupted absence of 6 months is a charitable definition of inactivity.
- When asked if there was a procedure in place for monitoring stewardship of the Word that allows you to detect early signs of inactivity, you wrote, “*Yes, worship attendance is monitored through the Friendship Register.*” We asked, “*Is there an organized and active program to reach out to members who are straying?*” You answered, “No.”
- When responding to the statement, “*I feel, in general, that the programs being carried out by our church are...*” 31.5% of your surveyed members indicated, “*not meeting needs or barely passing*” (WELS average 22%) and 68.5% indicated, “*meeting needs or very effective*” (WELS average 78%). This is a key question on the survey because it helps to measure the overall satisfaction level of your membership with what your church is doing.
- We asked, “*All in all, do you feel you ‘fit in’ and are a part of the church family?*” 19.6% checked, “*generally no or at times*” (WELS average 24%) and 80.4% indicated, “*usually or very much so*” (WELS average 76%). This also is an important survey question. Responses help us to understand, in general, how *accepted* members feel. Whenever

members do not feel accepted, there is a much higher probability that some of them will stop participating in worship and other functions, or they go elsewhere.

“Nothing is in place; we have no system for tracking and following up with our straying members over time.” (Leader)

Actions to Consider

- Assimilation is key to closing the back door and retaining both current and future members. Research has shown that membership retention and involvement is built primarily on four key principles, each of which appears to be equally important. If any of these is lacking, assimilation will be problematic. The key principles follow:
 1. Clearly articulated biblical expectations prior to membership
 2. Development of caring relationships prior to membership and thereafter
 3. Involvement in meaningful ministry within the first few months of membership
 4. Ongoing participation in some type of small groupNote that a person involved in a Bible study is five times more likely to be active in church five years later than a person who only participates in worship. Review these principles and then ask, “What could we improve here at Good Shepherd?”
- Take a close look at your pool of inactive people to see if they have anything in common. This effort could reveal an emphasis in your ministry that is lacking or a group of people that is being overlooked (e.g., teens, singles, empty nesters, etc.). Remember that personal conversations with the straying are helpful, especially when the approach is caring (e.g., “*What’s happening in your life?*”), as opposed to an institutional approach (e.g., “*Why aren’t you coming to church?*”).
- Beyond Covid, put in place a process to ensure that every person who is absent from worship three (or, at the most, four) Sundays receives a personal contact. A great deal of research indicates a much higher likelihood of regaining people when they are cared about and listened to early in the process of drifting. (For example, one study suggested that those contacted within 6 weeks of a change in worship patterns have as high as a 90% retention rate. When contacted after 6 months, there is a 20% retention rate. Less than 10% of the straying is reclaimed when contact is made after one year.) It’s important to convince the strayed and straying – both by words and actions – that they are known, valued, and loved. Strive to have a face-to-face contact with every member every month.
- Purposely select and train a core of caring men, women (to nurture other women), and teens (to nurture other teens) – ideally, 10-12 people – and systematically encourage the strayed and straying. These helpers would primarily make caring, initial contacts as they work under those elected to have oversight in this area of ministry.
- Focus first on those who have most recently become inactive, then focus on the others. Also, concentrate on a manageable number so that you can follow through on the process without stringing it out so long that it becomes ineffective. At the same time, be sure that those who are asked to serve in this sensitive area of ministry have both the spiritual maturity and the practical training to reclaim, lovingly and firmly, those who are at greatest spiritual risk. “Go by Grace” (NPH) is one training tool you might

choose to use. The goal is to make every effort to build meaningful relationships and communicate Christian love.

- Assist members who are living at a distance, and are no longer able or willing to be active at Good Shepherd, with locating and connecting with another WELS church.
- Ask for a copy of “Suggested Exit Interview Questions” and conduct caring exit interviews with members who are in the process of leaving. This will help bring to light useful information. Track and review this data annually.
- Those ultimately removed from membership, as an act of love, should be placed on the prospect list (unless they decisively resist). As with all prospects, establish timely and caring contacts. Then wait on the Lord to bless your labors. Furthermore, pray for these people both privately (as you remember individuals/families by name) and in public worship (as a group). We don’t give up on the strayed because our Savior wants to see them in heaven, and so do we!

In many of our churches the goal of the elders is to get inactive people to “come back to church and take communion.” This leaves the distinct impression (with those we hope to reclaim) that the expectation, in order to keep up appearances or to keep the elders from putting on more pressure, is to show up at church and commune once in a while. This all-too-common approach usually falls short because it never really deals with the specific “hurdles” in people’s lives that are affecting their relationship with Jesus.

The question is, *“What are the specific reasons some of our members have discontinued their worship?”* When those reasons are lovingly discovered and addressed, real and lasting success often follows. This is especially true when ministry to at-risk members is personal, persistent and – as much as possible – preemptive (seeking to prevent the consequences of poor spiritual health).

5. Group Life and Fellowship

The goal of congregational group life and fellowship is to connect Christians with one another in relationships and structures that foster authentic support and accountability. In a world of sin and uncertainty and hardship and death, such relationships and structures are critical. Christians need each other.

The many *“one another”* passages in Scripture underscore that truth, and it all has to do with love. How wonderful it is when love, and the Christian fellowship that flows out of love, abounds in God’s family! What a wonderful witness Christian love is to the people of our community! Jesus asserted, *“Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another”* (John 13:34-35). To what extent are Good Shepherd’s members known for their love?

Findings – Facts and Figures

- The program grade given by leaders to “Fellowship – Mutual Love and Comfort” was B and “Counseling – Meeting the Needs of Your Members” was given the grade B-.
- Responding to the question, “*What one major area do you feel should receive more emphasis in our congregation?*” from those listed, members ranked “Group Life and Fellowship” #5.
- You indicated that 115 or 29% of your communicant members (50 or 28% of your men and 65 or 29.5% of your women) are involved in some type of fellowship group.
- One perspective was that OWLS, Women's Ministry events, and Boy/Girl Pioneers are among the healthiest church groups; several annual events are well supported (church picnic, chili cook-off, family bowling, men's softball league, and microbrew outing); and ministry to/by teens has struggled and would benefit from greater participation.
- You listed about 14 groups or organizations that bring people together for service, music, fellowship, fun, and recreation. Among those listed were MCC, Women's Ministry, Adult Choir, Ignite (new teen ministry), 20s and 30s (also new), and OWLS.
- We heard that you have an excellent Group Life Coordinator and 8 fellowship gatherings or events that bring people together in your congregation during the course of the year (Easter Breakfast, Advent Dinners, Lenten Dinners, Confirmation Reception, Annual Picnic, Church/School Work Days, Chili Cook-off, and Teen Trips).
- Member survey results:

“How do you feel about the fellowship and group life of our congregation?”

30% *“not meeting needs or barely passing”* (WELS average 26%)

70% *“meeting needs or very effective”* (WELS average 74%)

“How do you feel about efforts to care for hurting and needy people?”

50% *“not meeting needs or barely passing”* (WELS Avg 18%)

50% *“meeting needs or very effective”* (WELS Avg 82%)

“Church activities for me are...”

11% *“something to avoid, a necessary duty.”* (WELS Avg 14%)

89% *“somewhat satisfying, a major source of satisfaction.”* (WELS Avg 86%)

“All in all, do you feel you ‘fit in’ and are valued as a part of this church family?”

20% *“generally no, at times”* (WELS Avg 24%)

80% *“usually, very much so”* (WELS Avg 76%)

These responses underscore the need for enhancing group life and fellowship at Good Shepherd. There appears to be a significant level of discomfort, uneasiness, and perhaps pain among some members – stemming possibly from feeling neglected and having unmet needs. Too often it's too easy, especially for some of our “less-connected” members, to fall through the cracks. Of course, not just the pastor and leaders will want to watch so that doesn't happen. All members must be alert to each other's needs, and those in need must not hesitate to let their hurts/desires be known.

- You have regular public, formal receptions into membership for all new members (“Yes, but none in 2019. OWLS have volunteered to organize.”)

- There is a planned program for integrating new members into the life of the church. (*"We are currently working to implement our Personal Member Ministry Program. We're in the initial stage of this program, so we're not yet actively involved."*)
- You believe there are enough different groups to meet the fellowship needs of your members (*"8 areas of ministry, each has opportunities, i.e., shepherding, outreach, property, school, group life, mission resources, spiritual growth, and worship"*).
- You indicated that you do not have a structure to ensure your members are cared for in time of need (*"Nothing active at this time."*)

"I would like to connect to other Christians in the congregation and develop a stronger Church family." (Member)

Actions to Consider

- It appears you have a healthy number of groups, but there is almost always a need to discontinue some groups from time to time and/or add others that are primarily centered on areas of common concern, shared interest, or needed support. Give people freedom to experiment.
- In evaluating program offerings, it's important to think in terms of two major audiences – your congregation and community – and the various people groups within each. Addressing the observable social and spiritual needs of people, both within your church and community, are great ways to build meaningful relationships, demonstrate Christian love, and earn a positive reputation. With this in mind, consider both on-site and off-site locations for your ministry programs.
- Consider opening your current gatherings and events to the community.
- Ensure that planning for your events starts early so everything is in place. Also, review and document what went well and what didn't after each event, then adjust your plans.
- Some members feel that fellowship life at your church is great. These members have relatives/friends and feel fulfilled. If this describes you, your meaningful and supportive relationships may be viewed as an obstacle by the less-connected members or your guests who don't yet feel like they are "part of the family." When you are with your relatives/friends, take a look around. Who is standing alone? Who appears to be feeling awkward? Think *ministry opportunity*, and move in that person's direction.
- Ponder these practical principles as you build on your existing fellowship life.
 - ◆ People today are more likely to come together around common interests, needs, and concerns rather than being grouped by age, gender, or marital status.
 - ◆ Many events attracting a small number of people will be more effective than a few events for a large number of people, if the goal is to connect people who do not yet have close friendships in the congregation.
 - ◆ Members, not leaders, generate the best events and groups. A "climate of permission" encourages people to try new ideas.
 - ◆ Not everything will be successful, but you'll learn what works best on the basis of experience.

- ◆ The best fellowship gatherings will probably be support groups – small, intimate, and organized around hurts and needs – such as grieving, surviving cancer, dealing with addiction, mothering toddlers, or parenting teens.
- ◆ Small-group Bible studies (which you have) combine close relationships of support and accountability with spiritual growth and service.
- ◆ Seniors often value social connectedness even more than during their earlier years, derive significant health benefits from interacting with others, and gain spiritual value from continued church participation.
- Evaluate your existing groups, consider which groups are most needed at your congregation during this planning cycle, and remember that starting new groups is a good way to attract new people.
- Open your fellowship activities and groups to members of the community when it is appropriate.
- It was estimated that your Family Picture Album in the hallway was about 75% current. Time to update?

We can talk more about building a healthier fellowship life at your church as your ministry planning process continues.

6. Ministry to Children, Youth, and Their Families

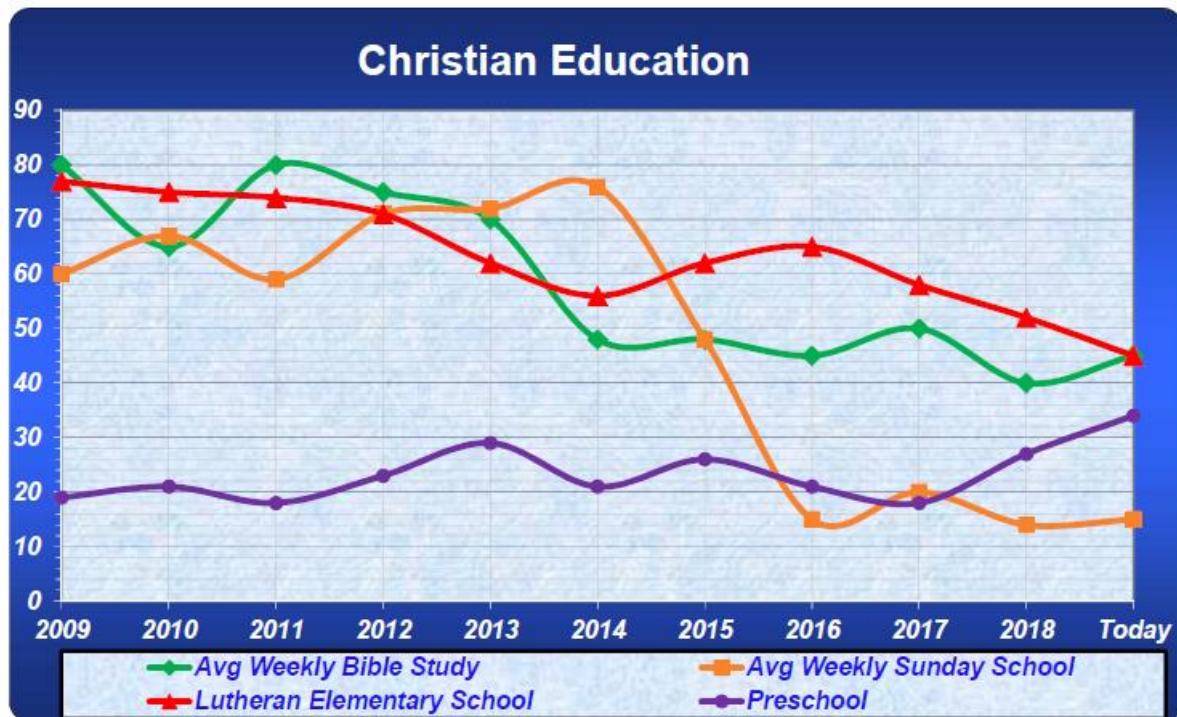
“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Proverbs 22:6). Since this proverb was first penned, God's people have been inspired by it to invest endless time and effort and other resources into raising their children – and assisting with the spiritual training of other children – so that they would know, love, serve, and share their Savior throughout their lives and into eternity. And we certainly know how Jesus loves and has concern for children. *“Jesus called the children to him and said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these’”* (Luke 18:16).

Little children (including those in the womb, infants, toddlers, and preschoolers), older children (including those in the early grades, tweens, and teens) and, of course, young adults and people of all ages are precious to the Lord. He proved this by willingly living and dying for all of us, and he puts us in families (church families too) so together we can know him, grow up in him, and then finally live with him in our heavenly home. That's why you care about ministry to children, youth, and their families.

Findings – Facts and Figures

- The program grade given by leaders to “Christian Education – Children” was A- and “Youth/Young Adult Ministry” received the grade D+.
- Responding to the question, “What one major area do you feel should receive more emphasis in our congregation?” members ranked “Children's Spiritual Growth” #8 and “Teen Program” #3 out of 9.

- When asked, “How do you feel about our congregation’s program of Christian education for children?” 10% of your surveyed members responded, “not meeting needs or barely passing” (WELS average 8%), and 90% responded, “meeting needs or very effective” (WELS average 92%). Typically, members primarily think about their congregation’s LES when responding to this survey question. This would also include the Academy’s preschool.



- 43.8% Bible Study Attendance Decrease in Percent from 2009 to 2019
- 75.0% Sunday School Attendance Decrease in Percent from 2009 to 2019
- 41.6% LES Enrollment Decrease in Percent from 2009 to 2019
- + 78.9% Preschool Enrollment Increase in Percent from 2009 to 2019



**GOOD SHEPHERD
LUTHERAN ACADEMY**
To know, to grow, and to show.

Findings – Facts and Figures

Your Preschool

- While not as old as your elementary school, the preschool has become a vital part of your ministry to children and their families and continues to show Good Shepherd’s love and concern for children.

- Your preschool enjoys an excellent reputation with the families it serves and in the community. When asked if she would recommend the preschool to others, one parent responded, *“Yes. Without a doubt and we will be sending our daughter to GSLA and would highly recommend the school to anyone.”*
- The Lord has blessed your preschool with an excellent staff, a growing enrollment, and the opportunity to share Jesus with children and their families. Parental comments include:
 - *“Our son surprises us every day with what he has learned.”*
 - *“The preschool allowed us to incorporate more religion into our children’s life, inviting us to church, events, etc.”*
 - *“The staff is just incredible, loving and nurturing.”*
- The numerical success of the preschool is seen in the increasing enrollment, and enrollment has the potential to continue to increase.
- There is a significant pool of children in the area from which to draw students for your preschool. Children 0-4 years old: 7,707 in 2019, 7,684 in 2024, 7,907 in 2029
- The potential for continued growth of your preschool program is limited by the space available in your facilities.
- The tuition for preschool appears to be appropriate. A majority of parents responding to the preschool survey felt the tuition charged for preschool was appropriate for the area and similar to other preschools.
- There is limited success in retaining the preschool children for the elementary school program, a challenge all our WELS preschools and schools face.
- There is limited success in working with the preschool families and sharing Jesus with them.
- The limited success is partially due to the lack of a detailed, written harvest strategy that is implemented from preschool through 8th grade and includes all your programs for children.

Actions to Consider

- Include possible expansion of the preschool as part of the discussion when doing future ministry planning.
- Review the usage of the spaces available in your building to make certain the spaces are utilized wisely.
- One key to attracting more children to your preschool is letting the community know you exist. Word of mouth publicity is always good. Today’s young families most often turn to the internet when searching for something. Make certain Good Shepherd has an appropriate digital presence on the popular social media platforms. Review the success Carlsbad Christian Academy has enjoyed through its social media presence. Mr. Roekle has the material.
- Develop the strongest possible harvest strategy for your entire Academy starting at the preschool level. A harvest strategy is a consistently-executed strategy for building relationships especially with those who do not have a church home. Request materials on this. Also, view this online [presentation](#). The harvest strategy should also compliment the outreach efforts of the evangelism program.

- Consider hosting a *Telling the Next Generation* workshop for your congregation (a rapid-action recommendation). Contact Cindi Holman at the WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools to make arrangements.
- Consider offering programs that would serve and support parents. An example would be *Time Out for Moms*. If interested, request an outline for starting this ministry.
- Annually review the tuition charges to insure they are appropriate for your program and competitive with other preschools in the area.

Findings – Facts and Figures

Your Lutheran Elementary School

- Good Shepherd held its first worship service in 1975. In 1979 the congregation opened Good Shepherd Lutheran School.
- Now known as Good Shepherd Lutheran Academy, the Lord has blessed your program of Christ-centered education for children for 41 years.
- The Lord has also blessed GSLA with talented and dedicated teachers, staff, and volunteers
 - Hats off to all the volunteers who step forward to help at school.
 - Forensics “coaches”
 - OWLS members
 - 95.7% of members surveyed rated the professional development of your teachers as acceptable or strong.
 - 100% of students surveyed indicated, *“My teacher cares about me.”*
 - 100% of parents surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that GSLA teachers serve as positive Christian role models to parents and students.
 - Are faculty members visible, do they participate in congregational life? *“Yes, they are involved in Bible study, women's ministry, music, and help with various church events.”*
- In recent years the enrollment for the Academy has declined.
- The Academy enjoyed its highest enrollment of 77 in 2008.
- The Academy's enrollment decreased by 26 or 34% from 2008 (77) to the present (51).
- The Academy's enrollment enjoys an increased enrollment for the current school year (51) over last year's enrollment (43). This is a 19% increase.
- With 51 students and 5 teachers, the Academy's student to teacher ratio is 10 to 1.
 - This ratio allows for excellent student and teacher interaction and attention.
 - However, this ratio drives up the cost of education.
- Good Shepherd intentionally changed the name of its school in an effort to reach out to the community. Using the school as an outreach arm for the congregation is a major reason the school exists.
- Academy facilities
 - GSLA has attractive and well-maintained classrooms. The atmosphere of the school is pleasant, warm, and welcoming.
 - Under COVID conditions, the classrooms are at or near capacity.
 - As with all schools, the Academy has storage room shortages.

- Your consultants heard consistently from members of all ages, as well as the school staff, that the lack of a multi-purpose room (gym) hurts recruitment.
- Academy enrollment
 - 59 children in your congregation ages 5-13; 29 attend GSLA (49%).
 - Limited pool of future students in the congregation (i.e., 18 children ages 0-4)
 - Substantial pool of potential students in the community
 - Children ages 5-17 20,062 in 2019
20,185 in 2024
20,436 in 2029
- Recruitment
 - Providing *Christian* education for children is of minor importance according to your demographics, whereas providing *high quality* education is very important.
 - Adult education attainment is high in your area; adults value education.
 - 2019 – 58.4% of adults had at least an associate’s degree.
 - 2024 – 59.1% of adults will have at least an associate’s degree.
 - Recruitment must be...
 - Organized.
 - On-going.
 - Fit with the overall evangelism effort of the congregation.
- Your reputation with people who know you is good. Surveyed parents...
 - 93.4% stated student achievement was acceptable to strong.
 - 92.9% agreed or strongly agreed that the total education program offered to students is of high quality.
 - 92.9% agreed or strongly agreed that GLSA’s curriculum adequately prepares students to continue their education at more advanced levels.
- Recruitment
 - Member surveys showed the following areas needed improvement.
 - 34.0% School promotion and publicity
 - 36.2% Recruiting member children
 - 28.3% Recruiting mission prospects
 - 45% of the families in your area consider Christian education for children an important concern. However, other ministry areas are of greater concern.
 - Families are *not seeking Christian education*.
 - Families are *seeking high quality* education.
 - Your Academy must *offer high quality Christian* education.
 - GSLA offers both as demonstrated by the Academy’s earning an exemplary rating through WELSSA.
- GSLA offers before/after school care for students, a plus for recruitment purposes.
- Funding
 - GSLA current cost of education per student is about \$8,600.
 - Current tuition charges
 - \$3,222 for members (\$5,378 congregational subsidy)
 - \$4,707 for non-members (\$3,893 congregational subsidy)
 - Congregational subsidy for students impacts other ministry efforts.

- Income earners in the area can afford tuition.
 - Average household income
 - 2019 - \$109,074
 - 2024 - \$121,200
 - Median household income
 - 2019 - \$82,750
 - 2024 - \$91,499
- Good Shepherd does offer financial assistance to families with substantial challenges.

Actions to Consider (LES)

- Arrange to attend a *Telling the Next Generation* workshop to help develop a unified, coordinated harvest strategy for the entire Academy.
- Merge the harvest strategy into the overall evangelism effort of the congregation.
- Invest time, effort, and appropriate funding in your digital presence on all major platforms.
- Review your funding model for the school (*Rethinking Sustainability* by Alan Pue).
- Review and revise your communication plan.
 - Capitalize on digital presence.
 - Determine what platforms are used most.
 - Keep communication consistent.
 - High quality is a must.
 - Continue use of other communication means.
 - Newsletters (less writing and more visual is more effective)
 - Bulletin announcements
 - Video presentations after worship services
 - Regular emails – consider a link to a video of something happening at the Academy.
 - Coordinate the Academy's communication plan with the congregation's plan.
 - Share your successes; tooting your own horn is totally acceptable.
 - Keep the Academy in front of the entire congregation.
- Conduct exit interviews with families who choose to leave GSLA.
 - What was the reason?
 - What can you do to address the reasons?
- Consider offering non-traditional programs or co-curricular activities.
 - Lego League
 - Robotics
 - See what other schools are offering.
- Consider using technology to offer courses such as a foreign language, more advanced math courses (geometry), or computer coding.

Findings – Facts and Figures (Other Family-Related Ministries)

BLAST Sunday School

- BLAST (Believe, Learn, and Seek Truth) – comprised of devotions, prayer time, stories, crafts, and snacks – is for all children ages 3 to 8th grade.
- Good Shepherd is fortunate to have a dedicated Sunday School Coordinator.
- The total number of children at your congregation ages 0-13 is 77 (18 ages 0-4, 59 ages 5-13). You indicated that you have 53 Sunday School children and that 38 or 72% of them are inactive. Average weekly Sunday School attendance is only 15 (28%).
- It appears that about 25 children may not be connected with either your Sunday School or LES. Someone needs to be responsible for these missing youth and make planned, ongoing contacts with their parents, including personal visits.
- You do not have regular (monthly) Sunday School staff meetings.

Boy & Girl Pioneers

- Your Pioneer program is for boys and girls grades 1-8.
- Pioneer programs often die due to lack of leaders. Please remember to recognize and thank your leaders. Also, pray for the success of your Pioneer program.
- Consider opening this program to children from the community. Encourage your children to invite community friends to attend.

Vacation Bible School (VBS)

- You had a record enrollment (80 children) in 2018. The 2019 enrollment was 70.
- VBS is a good tool for reaching out into the community.
- Your VBS has a proven record of success in bringing children onto you campus and making families aware that you exist.
- To capitalize on your VBS effectively, Good Shepherd needs a follow-up program.
- As you develop a complete harvest strategy, include VBS follow-up in the strategy.

Teens

- We requested, but did not receive, how many and what percentage of high school age teens there are at Good Shepherd who are inactive.
- When asked on your member survey, *“How do you feel about our congregation’s program of spiritual growth for youth (ages 14-18)?”* 70% indicated, *“not meeting needs or barely passing”* (WELS average 38%), and 30% responded, *“meeting needs or very effective”* (WELS average 62%).
- You are blessed to have a new teen ministry (Ignite) and energized youth leader.

20-Somethings

- Good Shepherd recently formed a 20s and 30s group, and we commend you for this.
- A question being asked repeatedly these days is, *“How can the church be relevant without compromise in a world that is changing rapidly?”* This is especially an important question when we count the number of 18-29 year-olds in our churches and then compare that number with those who are actually involved in worship and service.

At Good Shepherd there are about 61 in this age group. How many of them are worshiping with you, and how many of these young men and women are in Bible study or service roles at your church?

- The sound bites that describe twenty-somethings are that they long for experience, belonging, identification, and community. Yet some, especially those outside the church, see our services as antiquated. They see our message, with which they struggle to connect, as irrelevant. Some, raised and educated by total relativism, are opposed to absolute truth. Their dress code is casual and institutional bureaucracy bores them.
- The reality here is that, if we wish to reach and keep those in this age group, our ministry to and with them must become intentional. It no longer is good strategy (and it never was) that we wait until they marry, have children, and then maybe, just maybe they will come back or seek out a church. We must end that flawed thinking because fewer and fewer are coming back or taking the initiative to seek us out. Begin thinking about intentionalizing ministry to these young adults.

“The congregation probably doesn’t know there is a college ministry.” (Leader)

Actions to Consider (Other Family-related Ministries)

- Use your Sunday School staff meetings as spiritual growth opportunities and for team building, ongoing teacher training, and discussion of lessons to assure accurate and thorough coverage of content – especially appropriate use of Law and Gospel.
- Experiment as you strive to “connect” with families in your congregation and community. Some congregations are finding success with a weekend retreat that encourages families to participate and learn together. Do you have members with a heart for children and special abilities or interests? Offer special one-time events (e.g., soccer camp, music camp) that incorporate the Word and might appeal in your community. If you can attract the kids, you’ll probably meet their parents.
- Declining participation in Sunday School is causing some of our congregations to ask: Is the traditional Sunday School paradigm still working at our church? Is this a program that needs to be revitalized or reinvented? Is it time to take out a blank page and rethink Christian education for children on Sunday morning? If you are interested in pondering questions like these, ask your consultants for a copy of *“Rethinking the Cherished Tradition of Sunday School.”*
- As a possible substitute for the traditional Sunday School, consider equipping parents to teach Bible lessons to their children. St. Andrew, Middleton, WI has a ministry for parents and children on Sunday mornings called *Plugged into Jesus*. Active learning in the gym replaces the traditional classroom-based Sunday School model. These activities confirm and deepen the children’s understanding of Jesus as well as allow opportunities for friendship and mentoring among the children. While the children are in the gym, parents gather to study a Bible lesson and discuss ideas for sharing the lesson with their children during the coming week.

- View the *Youth Ministry Made Simple* videos and other materials (from WELS Congregational Services) to gain insights and ideas for running an engaging and faith-building program for the teens in your congregation.
- Churches that reach and retain teens typically have the following in common: (1) they make young adult ministries a high priority and (2) they have an intentional strategy for engaging young adults. One strategy is connecting with teens at a variety of different points. A Sunday morning Bible class targeted at their issues reaches some. Service or leadership roles that match what they have an interest in or a heart for capture a few more. An occasional high profile event – such as a retreat or rally or road-trip service project – may get bigger numbers. Adult mentors or peers who work at building relationships with at-risk teens may connect with others. You'll be thinking about these and other possibilities as you create a new vision for ministry to and by teens.
- Secure (from NPH) *Transformed: Equipping Youth Leaders*, an eight-part video series that will be a helpful resource to anyone leading youth ministry in your congregation.
- Share with teens weekly devotions – “*Transformed: Devotions Connecting Teens to Christ*” – written specifically for them. For samples, go to wels.net/transformed. The devotions can be delivered via e-mail by subscribing at wels.net/subscribe.
- Check with St. Paul's, New Ulm, MN and St. Andrew, Middleton, WI on the excitement they have experienced with mission trips for teens. Also, check with Kingdom Workers.
- 18-29 Year Olds: (1) Schedule a special event for some of your active and inactive 18-29 year olds. (2) View the 3-minute YouTube video “*You Lost Me*” (by David Kinnaman). (3) Discuss the video and list common “reasons” young people leave the church. (4) Brainstorm on what to do about it. (5) Include some of these young adults as you develop a strategy for serving people their age and engaging them in ministry. Also, request information (from your lead consultant) on a mentor program for this generation.
- For an introduction to ministering to the hearts and minds of millennials and gen Z, go to resourcefulchurch.com/. Topics include: changing worldview and social structures, communication and technology, the current epidemic of loneliness, the role of church programs, mentoring, radical service and joining in the cause of the Gospel, and more.
- The primary agents through which God brings both material and spiritual blessings to families have been and will continue to be moms and dads. Parents are vital when it comes to providing “*training and instruction in the Lord*” to all the members of their household. [In fact, from a negative perspective, parents can undo in minutes or seconds what the church has spent weeks, months, and even years trying to accomplish.] If we are to succeed in nurturing children and teens, we must first and continuously succeed in nurturing their parents. As you look to the future, make strengthening families your first goal in your efforts to minister to children and youth (both in your congregation and community). Of course, for your goal of strengthening families to be realized, someone will need to own and act on it. Developing models of family ministry typically include at least three focal points: marriage enrichment, parenting classes, and networking of families.

What a blessing it is to grow up in a Christian family. What a blessing it is to be connected to a church family that cares about you and helps you along life's way – from infancy through all the stages of life – guided by Scripture and compelled by Christ's love.

7. Member Ministry

Personal member ministry is the service that every Christian offers to God in response to his love and forgiveness. Scripture makes clear that every Christian is a “minister,” one who serves God, and that every Christian has a “ministry,” a service to God to perform. We must emphasize, for the sake of the kingdom, that all Christians have the privilege of serving God throughout their lives within the context of their immediate and extended family, their local congregation, and their community.

Frequently our pastors, intent on involving members meaningfully in the church’s ministry, have been stymied by the tradition that ministry is what the pastor does. And that tradition was “caught” more than “taught” from a sainted pastor who did almost everything himself. Times have changed, and it’s about time! For centuries the Scriptures have provided a clear delineation of the pastor’s role. *“It was (Christ) who gave some to be... pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service”* (Ephesians 4:11-12). If pastors are to prepare people for works of service throughout their years of service, it will be important that they keep growing through ongoing study and training.

Findings – Facts and Figures

- The program grade given by leaders to “Use of Time & Talents within the Congregation” was B-.
- Responding to the question, “What one major area do you feel should receive more emphasis in our congregation?” from those listed, members ranked “Involving Members in Meaningful Service” #2 out of 9.
- You indicated that you have a process in place (which is not yet fully activated) to help members discover and use the gifts God has given them. You also have someone – Kristina John, PMM coordinator – who oversees volunteer recruitment and placement. All members are now encouraged to participate in the SHAPED (PMM) classes.
- When asked if you had a sufficient number of diverse opportunities for service, in and through your congregation, that all members could be involved in some role or task, you responded, *“Yes, each area of ministry has developed Ministry Position Descriptions for possible areas of service. The goal of our PMM program is to match up members with the opportunities.”*
- When members responded to the statement, *“In using my spiritual gifts in the work of the church...”* 17.8% indicated, *“I don’t know what my gifts are”* or, *“I would like to find out more”* (WELS average 40%), and 82.2% indicated, *“I would like to use my gifts if asked”* or, *“I have identified and I am using my gifts”* (WELS average 60%).
- Leaders and other members are anxious to involve more members in ministry, and they envision the benefits.
- One person’s perspective was that member participation was fairly healthy with Group Life, Property, School, Worship, and Mission Resources, and that especially Shepherding, Spiritual Growth, and Outreach need more participation.

- In the lay worker summary instrument, you indicated that 103 different members (25.9% of your communicant membership) served the Lord through your congregation during the past year. The estimated number of man/woman hours volunteered on average *per month* was 397. The categories with the most “donated” hours per month were Administration (188), Property and Facility (185), PMM (91), and Christian Education (88).
- Member comment to consider: *“Some ‘own’ ministry in a bad way, where they don’t like others honing in on ‘their’ ministry. We want to support the positive ‘owning’ of ministry where teams work together and take responsibility for the ministry in their care.”*

“There is more to come with our Personal Member Ministry program.” (Leader)

Actions to Consider

- Leaders, work hard at (1) explaining how loving service benefits people, (2) designing a system for assisting members in identifying and using their gifts, (3) matching appropriately gifted people with specific roles, (4) creating new roles when possible, and (5) providing needed training. These will need to be priorities if your people are to reach their potential for service in the kingdom, be the greatest possible blessing to each other, and have an ever-growing, positive impact in your community.
- We encourage all members of Good Shepherd to pray for, participate in, and enthusiastically promote your promising PMM program and PMM Coordinator.
- Read the WLS senior theses “Do Not Neglect the Gift You Have: The Blessings and Challenges of Equipping Ministry.” Request a copy of *“Three Keys to Recruiting Volunteers”* (or locate it via WLS Four Branches) and *The Definitive Guide to Finding, Training, and Keeping Church Volunteers*.
- Introduce all new members to the church’s history, ministries, structure, volunteer philosophy, existing opportunities, and also ask them, *“What’s missing?”*
- Periodically, show a brief video clip following worship that highlights the service of specific volunteers. Explain what they do and give them a chance to share the joy they have from serving their Savior. Start with your Ministry Coordinating Council.
- Continue to ensure that each person with a recognized role in your congregation (called workers, elected leaders, and other member volunteers) has a position description which is reviewed and revised (as deemed appropriate) annually. The congregation’s vision for future ministry and core strategic priorities will inform and guide the review process.
- A congregation that has utilized a Service Teams approach, which involves having most members take turns serving annually at regularly scheduled and special events, is Immanuel in Greenville, WI. Contact them for additional information.
- Continue to track member involvement statistics consistently and accurately. Tracking member participation in service roles will help you intentionalize member ministry and evaluate ministry effectiveness. Also, celebrate as you reach member involvement goals (e.g., 125, 150, etc. visible member ministers). Remember to recognize (privately and publicly) those who are involved – even in small or short-term tasks – so they know their service matters, that it’s making a difference, that they are valued and appreciated.

- A significant question in every congregation, especially for the congregation's leaders, is: *"Are women enabled and encouraged to use their tremendous gifts and energies in biblically appropriate roles as we work together to accomplish God's will?"* An opportunity to explore this issue is coming. In Phase 3 you will create a prioritized vision for future ministry and then (re)organize around that vision to accomplish your outreach and nurture ministry goals in the most effective and efficient ways possible. It will undoubtedly be a great blessing to your congregation and the kingdom when you learn to tap more fully into God's rich resource of willing workers, including both genders, guided by his Word.
- Looking to the future, think TEAMS (of men and women) as you multiply ministry through your members. For a good example of a highly-productive ministry team, which recently functioned in an exemplary manner at Good Shepherd, consider the Guiding Coalition that coordinated the completion of the numerous analysis instruments provided by Crossroads. Thank you (and others who assisted) for your service!
- One leader encouraged, *"Let's make sure we are not guilty of prohibiting women from serving, which is against God's plan for them."*

"We all have gifts that can be used to complement the mission of the church, so it's only right that pastor/leadership delegate roles/tasks, using those so gifted, according to the needs of the congregation." (Member)

The work of your church – rescuing the lost and nurturing believers – is not just the work of called workers and elected leaders. It's the work of all. A healthy church is one where all of God's people, regardless of age or gender, are using their gifts in service to their Savior. To encourage your leadership to pursue this as a goal, we are sharing with your leaders a list of principles and strategies that have proven to be useful in engaging more of God's people in roles of service that benefit them, their congregation, and the kingdom. Recruitment becomes a joy when we honor people by our requests that they willingly use their God-given gifts to serve their Savior.

8. Financial Stewardship

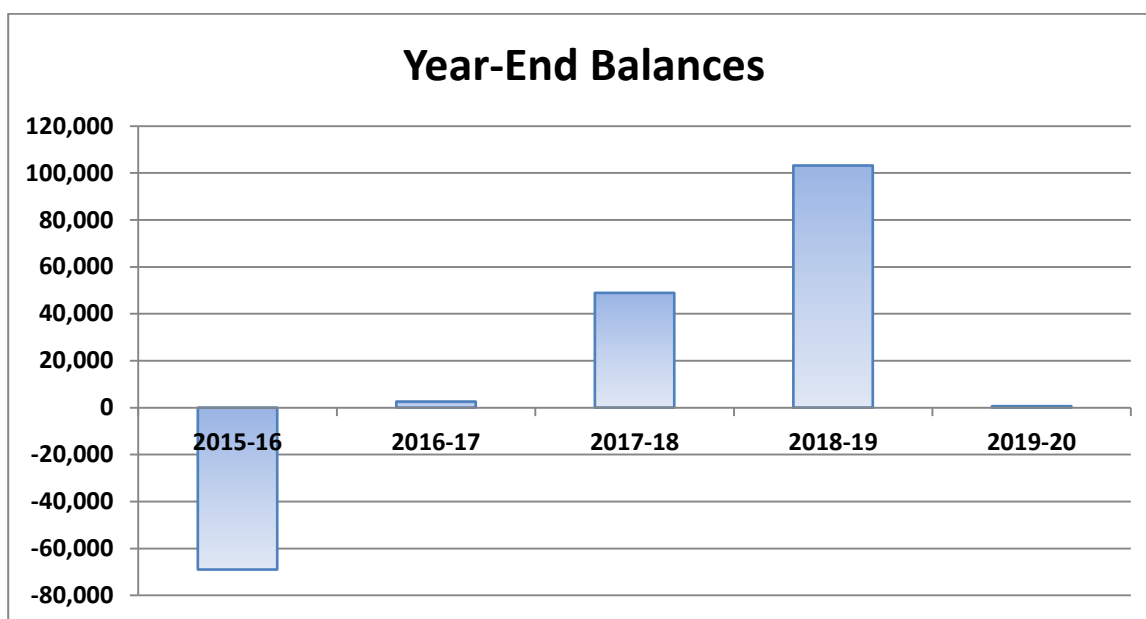
The more our Lord has possession of our heart, the more willing we are to give back to him a portion of what he has given to us. Only then will we trust him with what we formerly called "our" money, understand that our gifts to support his cause are truly great investments, be eager to give in proportion to God's gifts to us, see the value of a written plan for giving, and welcome more "talk about money." Then each of us will have become, by the Spirit's work within us, *"a cheerful giver"* (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Structured financial stewardship training focuses on helping people (1) see how "rich" they are in Christ, (2) discover true joy in supporting God's mission, and (3) manage money in ways that glorify their Lord. Providing financial stewardship training is an ongoing process as more people are rescued from Satan's clutches and then grow throughout their lives –

sometimes one small step at a time – in service to their Savior. Financial stewardship training is essential in every congregation, and it benefits both the giver and God’s work.

Findings – Facts and Figures

- The program grade given by leaders to “Stewardship – Use of Financial Resources for the Kingdom” was B+.
- Audits are conducted. Conducting annual audits is important for a variety of reasons. [See Actions to Consider.]
- We heard that Good Shepherd has gifted financial minds who oversee the use of your congregation’s resources, including your treasurer, who functions much like a Business Manager.
- Good Shepherd’s fiscal year budget balances for the last five years are shown below.



- For fiscal year 2019-20, a decrease in member giving (-\$81,338) was offset by increased revenue (\$38,490) through the school and a substantial decrease in overall expenses for the church and school (-\$44,096).
- Good Shepherd has no capital debt, which is a great position to be in as you plan for the future and set new ministry goals.
- You have both direct and online giving available to your members.
- Generous giving in the past has resulted in the availability of a financial reserve balance, which has been utilized in the last couple of years when giving decreased.
- The following are approximate reserve balances as of 6-30-20:
 - \$66,419 School Funds (\$56,923 Special Needs + \$9,496 SCRIP proceeds)
 - 102,246 Building Funds (\$51,381 + \$50,865 Building + Repair/Maintenance)
 - 48,709 Church (\$34,288 Capital Expenditure + \$8,494 Cap. Improv. + \$5,927 Memorial)
 - 69,376 Unencumbered (General Operating)
 - \$286,750

- Your Endowment Fund (\$135,000 as of 4-30-20) receives and administers bequests, estates, insurance, memorials and other assets (to be perpetual and perpetuating), to enhance the work of the church by supporting Good Shepherd in the areas of education, benevolence, congregation budget, new initiatives, and Synod needs.
- Good Shepherd received approximately \$120,000 as a CARES Act Impact loan (related to the Covid pandemic shutdown). Most, if not all of that amount, will likely be forgiven.
- As of 4-30-2020, the balance available for General Fund activities was \$69,377.
- Your 2018-19 budget included \$605,080 for salaries and benefits, which was 66.3% of the budget. Typically, personnel costs (salaries and benefits for both church and school sides of ministry) should not exceed 35-55% of the budget.
- What about the income and funding potential of your members? Based on the QuickInsite report, the 2019 average household income in your community was \$109,074. The median household income (an equal number of households above and below) in your study area was \$82,750.
- The average per capita income in your ministry area was \$43,091. That means the combined income potential of your membership might be in the range of \$20,338,952 (per capita income X 472 souls) for the year.
- Your collective giving last year for all purposes was \$677,132 (not including tuition, fees, interest, and other similar sources of income) or 3.3% of your combined income potential. Average giving in the WELS for 2019 was 2.4% of combined income potential (based on U.S. per capita income statistics).

If your current membership is not representative of those within your study area, these statistics may be too low or too high. Also, having one or more extremely generous families might inflate the collective giving percentage.

- For a comparison, here is financial data (per communicant giving) from the 2019 WELS Statistical Report, based on what your congregation submitted. Good Shepherd is in the Chicago Conference of the Southeastern Wisconsin District.

Per Comm. 2018	Cong. Offerings (Home)	% of All Offer.	CMO (Synod Offer.)	% of All Offer.	Other Synod Offerings	% of All Offer.	Additional Offer.	% of All Offer.	Avg. for All Offerings
Cong.	\$1,667	90.4%	\$177	9.6%	\$0	0.0%	\$0	0.0%	\$1,844
Conf.	\$1,268	90.5%	\$105	7.5%	\$13	0.9%	\$15	1.1%	\$1,401
Synod	\$1,116	89.6%	\$77	6.2%	\$9	0.7%	\$40	3.2%	\$1,242

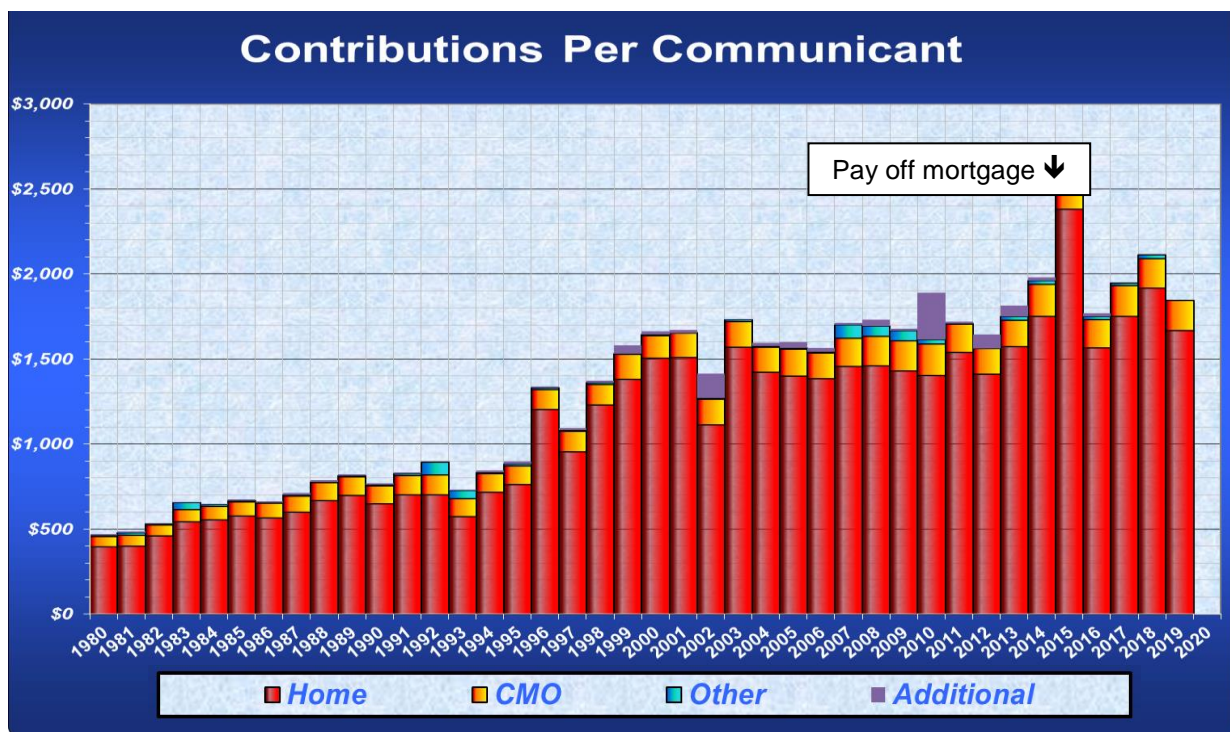
Notes: "CMO" is what a congregation gave toward its annual Congregational Mission Offering commitment. "Other" means any other offerings contributed to Synod by the congregation or its sub-units (e.g., LES, Sunday School, women's group, etc.). "CMO" and "Other" do not include reportable gifts and bequests to WELS from individuals, foundations, and other organizations. Including all these gifts (\$25,853,998) would raise the WELS per communicant average for all offerings in 2019 to \$1,334. "Additional Offerings" are those gifts given to other causes outside of the congregation (e.g., area Lutheran high schools, WLCFS/Christian Family Solutions).

➤ Here is a summary of member giving at Good Shepherd for 2018-2019.

- ◆ There were 176 giving units in your congregation.
- ◆ The grand total of all giving was \$677,132 (not including tuition/fees, interest, or similar sources).
- ◆ The top 5% or 9 of your giving units gave \$215,670 or 34.4% of your income.
- ◆ The top 10% or 18 of your giving units gave \$301,470 or 48.0% of your income.
- ◆ The top 20% or 36 of your giving units gave \$417,240 or 66.5% of your income. (*WELS norm: top 20% give 75% of their congregation's income.*)
- ◆ The top 50% or 88 of your giving units gave \$584,252 or 93.1% of your income.
- ◆ 0% or 0 of your giving units gave \$0 (nothing).
- ◆ 18% or 31 of your giving units gave \$.01-100.
- ◆ 12% or 21 of your giving units gave \$101-500.
- ◆ 11% or 19 of your giving units gave \$501-1,000.
- ◆ 26% or 45 of your giving units gave \$1,001-3,000.
- ◆ 11% or 20 of your giving units gave \$3,001-5,000.
- ◆ 16% or 29 of your giving units gave \$5,001-10,000.
- ◆ 6% or 11 of your giving units gave \$10,001 or more.

One leader observed, *“Average giving is good, but probably due to some large givers at the top end.”* If a few of your giving units are unusually generous, your congregation may be at some risk (e.g., if/when one or more of these giving units are no longer present or able to give at previous levels).

- Your consultants do not recall another congregation they served where every confirmed member gave some amount for the year. You're doing something right.
- The goal is for every member to discover the joy of giving generously, regularly, and proportionately to the Lord in response to his undeserved material and spiritual gifts.
- This graph shows your congregation's average annual contribution per communicant from 1980 through 2019.



Actions to Consider

- Why don't members give more? Research suggests there may be several barriers to more generous giving: (1) There is no compelling vision for how their money will make a difference – a leadership issue. (2) They do not see a sufficient “return on their investment” – an efficiency or productivity issue. (3) They are unaware of the biblical guidelines and motivation for giving – a theological or educational issue. (4) They are not personally asked to give; they may only read about giving in printed materials – a process issue. (5) They are just selfish – a sinful heart issue. Foolishly, they think, *“I worked hard for this money, so it's mine to use as I please.”* Good Shepherd's leaders need to evaluate each of these potential barriers and take loving, corrective action. Also, most barriers are compounded by poor communication. We assume people know or understand, but we're often mistaken. It takes a purposeful and well-executed approach to facilitate ongoing ministry support.
- Keep in mind that the least effective annual stewardship programs ask, *“What does my church need to balance its budget?”* The most effective programs encourage members to ask, *“What percentage of my income is the Lord calling me to give to support his work through my congregation?”* Additionally, research indicates that, on average, people who write their intentions on a card that they turn in during an annual stewardship campaign give twice as much as people who don't.
- The financial landscape for churches is changing. Overall, people are giving more to charity but less to churches. Contact your lead consultant for one perspective on *“5 Money Shifts Every Church Should Make.”*

- Offer qualified personal financial guidance to members upon request (e.g., budget formation and management, eliminating debt, estate planning) in addition to hosting events for members and community residents (e.g., Dave Ramsey classes).
- We commend Good Shepherd for having an Endowment Fund, and we encourage you to provide ongoing promotion of wills awareness and planned giving to members in various stages of life (e.g., young families, empty nesters, seniors). Because new members continually join your congregation and circumstances in the lives of your existing members change, have a WELS Christian giving counselor provide updated information (via a seminar) every three years. Also, gratefully celebrate planned gifts from saints who are now with Jesus.
- Ensure that annual audits are conducted (either internally or through an outside agency). Audits ensure that (1) church finances are being managed well and with full integrity, (2) strengthen financial systems, (3) protect those who have financial responsibilities, and (4) provide confidence to all that the congregation's finances are in good order. Ask your consultants for a sample Audit Team position description.
- As we strive to accomplish our Lord's mission, we need not be shy about encouraging brothers and sisters in Christ to consider using the tithe (10% of income) as a guide for giving, and we offer you that encouragement. For some the tithe is a distant goal; for others it's the place to start. Some members in most congregations tithe and many more could. If more did tithe (in joyful response to God's love and forgiveness in Christ), surely the Lord would not hold back on his promises to bless the cheerful giver.

Ongoing training in financial stewardship principles is essential. God's people need to know what their Lord says about this faith-related subject. Those who are his children will want to listen and, crucifying their selfish motives, cheerfully respond in ways that give God glory. During this planning process you will give serious thought to this important issue as you anticipate funding future ministry.

"Giving is down, but it could increase with a compelling vision." (Member)

9. Administration: Leadership, Organization, Communication

The three administrative components mentioned in this section are each significant when striving for congregational health through faithful management of God's resources. Servant-hearted leaders are positioned to have positive influence among those they serve. Organizational structure either enhances or hinders both immediate and future efforts to engage members in ministry and be effective as well as efficient in accomplishing the congregation's core strategic priorities. Communication affects relationships throughout the organizational system and, when improved, has the potential to enhance awareness and increase ownership of ministry.

Findings – Facts and Figures

- The program grade given by leaders to “Administration – Planning and Leadership” was B-.
- Good Shepherd has a Mission Statement and Call to Action (displayed on your website).
- We commend your leaders for developing a 3-year Ministry Plan in 2016, which you began to implement in 2017. Unfortunately, a major turnover in leadership, including the loss of your two pastors in 2018, derailed the implementation process.
- You do not have an annual planning process that regularly measures results.
- How volunteers are recruited, positioned to serve, and trained: *“Now, mostly personal recruitment by the Coordinator in charge of that ministry (man or woman). In the future, hopefully through the PMM program.”*
- Ministry programs are normally initiated and evaluated by the 8 MCC coordinators and their counterparts in Women's Ministry.
- There is only 1 established leadership position in your congregation that is currently vacant (i.e., Treasurer). Your president currently fills this role.
- Your new ministry program, i.e., PMM, is currently being launched.
- Leaders schedule open forums twice a year before voters' meetings.
- Several people spoke about there being a *founding member culture* at Good Shepherd. One person feared that expressions like *“I’m a charter member”* caused some to feel devalued and isolated.
- When asked, “What is the general mood of your elected leaders at this point?” the response was: *“generally good, but there is apprehension over downward trends (attendance, school enrollment, funding).”*
- We asked, *“Do communications in your congregation keep all your members adequately aware of what is taking place?”* The response was, *“Yes, all electronic – weekly newsletter along with many notices, as needed. However, this does not reach everyone due to email limitations.”*
- When asked, *“Do you feel you have a part in the decision-making in our congregation?”* those surveyed responded:

47.3%	“no” or “to a small degree”	WELS Avg 53%
52.7%	“sometimes” or “yes”	WELS Avg 47%

“I think members are on autopilot and rely on MCC and Pastor to dictate ministries.” (Member) ***“Can we replace fear with Gospel-driven optimism?”***

“We need more hands to help with administration, while also establishing clear relationships and lines of accountability and communication.” (Pastor)

Actions to Consider

- Prior to your annual elections, distribute a *Leadership Nomination* form that members can use to submit names to your nominating committee. (Ask your consultant for a sample.)
- Create a Lay Leadership Development Plan that is lay led (by a coordinator or director, possibly an established or assigned position on the MCC). This leader would annually work with

the pastor to design a plan that would help both established and emerging leaders assess and develop their Christian character and acquire, reinforce, and refine their ministry knowledge and skills. *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church* is one book that encourages intentional leadership development.

- As our ministry planning process continues, your leaders will be engaged in activities that will enhance their leadership capabilities. At this point, we will provide (directly to your leaders) some answers to the question, “*What makes better leadership?*” (Leaders, please review and discuss this material.)
- You have one church/school secretary at this time (down from two). Revisit this and determine the level of office support that will be needed based on your new vision.
- Contact your lead consultant about scheduling a CliftonStrengths consultation for your leadership team (i.e., pastors, principal, and elected leaders). You will want to build the strongest team possible as you focus on implementing your ministry goals. Your school faculty is another team that would benefit from scheduling a CliftonStrengths consultation. Personal consultations are also available and recommended.
- Many people in leadership roles now have position descriptions, which is commendable. Make sure everyone who has a called, elected, or appointed position also has a position description. Review and update the position descriptions annually based on agreed-to goals and responsibilities.
- Your Bylaws call for having a Care Committee for Called Workers (CCCW), but this is not in place. Review the WELS resources for starting a CCCW, and include hired workers as well. Call 414-256-3888 for additional information.
- Compete aggressively for people’s attention. Effective communication will take considerable effort and must be redundant. Consider developing communication strategies, then review and improve them annually.

The communication goal is to get as much vital information out as possible, as early as possible, and as often as possible as you strive to engage, inform, and inspire your audience. After every meeting ask, “Who needs to know what?”

- Communicate visually either occasionally or (better) regularly. Are there some tech savvy members (including teens) who would be able and willing to assist? This would give them a special way to serve their Savior, and many would benefit from it.
- Hold accountable (in love) all those who are responsible for providing timely and accurate information, and those who handle the information must be dependable, efficient, and produce quality work – all common expectations.
- Continue to schedule open forums either as needed or on a periodic basis. This communication vehicle can, over time, develop into a means to help more of God’s people better understand ministry, accept ownership of it, and find more joy in serving. Open forums work well to gather initial input on issues long before policies are proposed or decisions are drafted. Of course, you will want your open forums to be truly “open.” You’ll want to seek input from all who have something to share, and

especially leaders must be careful that they are not defensive when listening. We will share with your leaders a helpful document entitled, “*Guidelines for Conducting Open Forums.*”

- After establishing your vision for future ministry, align your organizational system so you can better implement your ministry plans. Church organization should be so developed as to hold people accountable for carrying out their responsibilities. This implies the need for clearly written statements and descriptions detailing who takes care of what and a logical and equitable distribution of the congregation’s work. Ultimately, someone must “own” every idea or program that develops.
- Later in the planning process, you’ll be introduced to methodology for running meetings more effectively and efficiently with a bias towards *action* verses a bias towards *talk*. Additional recommendations will be provided at that time.

Church administration is ministry centered on people and compelled by Christ’s love. It requires confidence, integrity, sensitivity, timing, skill, and creativity. Effective church administration helps members see, grasp, and participate in Christ’s make-disciples mission by pursuing with passion the congregation’s vision.

Looking ahead, creating an agreed-to mission and vision will help you establish priorities, make critical choices, resolve problems, grasp opportunities for ministry, create balance, involve more members in ministry, and focus energies by setting your sights on the same God-honoring goals. Your primary objective is to be effective (to do the right things) as you strive to be efficient (to get things done in the best possible ways).

RAPID-ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a lot to think and pray about in this report, and it will take time to discuss some of the issues and thoughtfully weigh options before making decisions. As we go forward, there will be listening sessions (for all members to offer insights/suggestions), vision development (during which leaders will establish key priorities, objectives, and strategies), planning meetings (to assemble detailed action plans), and more of God’s people joyfully serving their Savior.

All that will take time and patience. But, that doesn’t mean you just sit still now and wait. There are actions you can focus on immediately. The following Rapid-Action Recommendations are proposed for your consideration:

1. Arrange to have a “*Telling the Next Generation*” workshop.
2. Clarify your actual and aspirational core values during your Clarifying Core Values discussions.
3. Start gathering more names/contact info for your prospect list and farm it faithfully.

4. Leaders, become familiar with the concepts in the book Traction (by Gino Wickman). A summary of this book will be shared with you.

THE FUTURE

As we look into the future together, let's plan to establish goals and priorities chiefly on the basis of the special strengths and blessings God has invested in your congregation and the unique ministry opportunities he presents in your community. Let's expect challenges as we go forward, but let's remember who guides and promises to bless us.

1. Challenges

Anticipate the following challenges:

Stay Focused on God's Saving Mission

Satan loves to distract God's people. He wants to get us to think only of ourselves; he wants us to be "*institution-minded*" instead of "*mission-minded*" and to pour our time and energies into self-preservation. That way fewer people will hear about Jesus. That way those who are saved will be robbed of the joy of sharing the Good News and miss out on witnessing the Holy Spirit work his miracles of conversion and transformation in the hearts and lives of others.

"*Go and make disciples...*" brings us back to the central mission of the Church and the central mission of our individual Christian lives – the dual mission of rescuing the lost and equipping the redeemed. When we get focused on that mission at church, at home, at work – when we pursue it daily – life is filled with meaning, purpose, and godly joy.

Organize Around Your Future Vision

Sometimes there are many ways of accomplishing goals; often there are better ways. Some organizational systems get in the way of progress; others enhance efforts and involve many more people in accomplishing more of God's work sooner.

After gathering additional input from your leaders and many other members, you will design your mission and vision for future ministry picturing what your church will look like in the future. At that time we'll address the issue of organizational realignment so we have a useful structure enabling us to move forward with confidence.

Believe the Lord Will Always Bless Your Labors

Work hard and work together with the expectation that the Lord will always bless your labors. Because our Savior was born in Bethlehem, lived without ever sinning, died for the

sins of all, and rose from the grave to prove it – *“Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain”* (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Good Shepherd faces some significant challenges as well as some exciting opportunities. Be confident that the God who called you to be his people will meet your needs, overcome your obstacles, and bless your church family as you boldly proclaim his truth to all.

“The majority of people feel that if we keep doing what we’re doing, we’re going to get the same results and/or slowly die. People are ready to try something different so we can thrive.” (Member)

2. Next Steps

Members of your congregation will have an opportunity to respond to this report – making observations, raising questions, and offering corrections. The goal will be to reach agreement that this report – as amended by you – accurately describes your congregation as it exists today. This discussion will conclude the analysis portion (Phase 2) of your planning process and will be the starting point as you plan for the future. Analysis is essential to understanding the strengths on which to build your future and the areas of improvement that must be addressed in order to carry out our Savior’s mission.

Phase 3 (Mission/Vision Setting) will help you develop clear and compelling ministry goals with input from as many members as possible. That process begins with the *“Preparing for the Future”* seminar, which addresses Philosophy of Ministry (why we do what we do the way we do it). We’ll explore both biblical and practical insights into our Christian freedom to develop new and potentially better ways to serve our Lord, each other, and others.

Please watch for these dates and times to be announced and plan to participate:

- **Saturday, _____, 9:00 am – 12:30 pm – Review of this Diagnostic Analysis and the *“Preparing for the Future”* seminar for ALL members** [A training session for leaders (listening session facilitators) will follow the seminar (12:45 – 1:30 pm).]
- **Saturday, _____ and Sunday, _____ – Listening sessions (for ALL members) will follow worship after each of your abbreviated services.**

3. A Word of Thanks

Thanks to all the members who made the on-site analysis weekend an enjoyable experience, who shared their opinions, and who completed member surveys. Now we look forward to continuing with the mission/vision setting phase of the ministry planning process. Your consultants hold you in their prayers before the Lord of the Church. May the Lord bless you with faithfulness, wisdom, zeal, and courage in the pursuit of his mission.