

Northeast Community Lutheran Church Leadership Retreat February 7, 2009: Where is God Leading Us Today?

Objectives of the Retreat:

- Faith building, team building, and trust building
- Groundwork for the steps needed to bring about our vision for NEC and the community
- Agreement on key priorities for 2009
- Commitment by the council to the priorities, the mission, and the direction of NEC

Retreat Agenda:

Welcome and Opening Devotions: Pastor Evelyn Dahlke

Quick Recap: Dave Raymond

- What are some of the strengths and assets of NEC?
- What are some of the obstacles we need to deal with?

A Framework: Dave Raymond

- Why do some churches do well while others struggle and decline? What does this mean for NEC?

Our Foundation: Pastor Craig Pederson

Review and re-consider our vision

Discussion: Facilitated by Pastor Craig Pederson

How does our foundation fit with the frame-work of thriving congregations?

Priorities for the next year: Dan Scoggins and Dave Raymond

- Key priorities advance our vision and fulfill our purposes
- Identify the three or four most important priorities

Bible Study on Nehemiah

Effective leadership in 2009: Dan Scoggins and Dave Raymond

- What is the most effective way to fulfill our call as the council and bring our priorities into fruition?
- How should we structure our council meetings to coordinate the work of the ministry teams and avoid getting bogged down and distracted?

Reflections on today and closing prayer

Attending the Retreat

Leaders and Facilitators:

Rev. Evelyn Dahlke
Rev. Craig Pederson
Dan Scoggins (NECL Council President)
Dave Raymond (Church Development Consultant)

Council Attendees:

Adelheid Koski (NECL Council Vice President)
Lane Speake (NECL Council Treasurer)
Jon Hamlow (NECL Council Secretary)

Amy Fields
Sandy Kortebein
Susan Mattson
Kathy Schadendorf
Sue Traxler
Cathie Witzel

Unable to attend:

Virginia Schnabel
Andrea Stelljes

Quick Recap

Strengths and Obstacles Brainstorm

Strengths:

- Community dinner
- Faithful and energetic members
- Contributing members
- Strong sense of mission
- Food shelf and clothing distribution
- Great music director
- Diversity of opinions and views
- Two buildings
- Financial resources
- Loyalty of NE Minneapolis community
- Joy, optimism and sense of humor
- Arts programs
- Underchurched area (discussion of terminology; meaning many constituents who are not regularly attending church)
- Interest of school district in NECL potentially acquiring Holland School facility

Obstacles:

- 2 Buildings: building issues, broken trusses
- Fear
- Aging congregation
- Tough recruitment challenges
- Not relevant
- Not dynamic
- Fatigue/burnout

A Framework

(Copies of presentation slide handouts available from Dave Raymond)

Healthy congregations nurture conflict (open debate) and avoid consensus (unexamined agreement)

Lessons of a major congregational study by Prof. Nancy Ammerman of 300 churches in nine communities to examine the habits of thriving versus declining churches

Eight Habits of Thriving Congregations

1. Thriving congregations have an ambitious vision for the congregation's future
2. Respectful conflict (debate) is fostered in thriving congregations
3. Thriving congregations embrace change
4. Thriving congregations engage in open decision-making
5. Thriving congregations have energetic, experienced and guided leadership
6. Thriving congregations shared food inclusively
7. Thriving congregations had appealing worship
8. Thriving congregations had appealing buildings that were well-utilized and supported the congregation rather than draining time and resources

Non-variables:

- Money
- Giving and consistent attendance
- Ideology, theology and denominations
- Evangelical style

Important Factors not found in the study:

- Priority on youth (some urban churches may thrive without youth)
- Culture of caring (churches can have active social ministries without thriving)

Minneapolis Area Synod "High Performance Congregations" Study

- Performing churches had diverse buildings and worship styles
- 4 of 5 had faced serious difficulty or disaster
- 2 of 5 had no formal Sunday School
- The five churches had 13 distinct worship styles
- All were very intentional about who they wanted to reach

Paradoxes we face:

- A church that exists to serve us versus a church that exists to give itself away
- Promises to long-term members versus the vision of a community church
- "It's all about God" versus "it's all about me"

Suggestions:

- Go back to Town Hall meeting reports
- Experiment and get feedback instead of permanent changes
- Look for crossover appeal
- Love your members

Models of consolidating churches:

- Elements combine, the worship style becomes more inward- oriented (focused on existing congregation) versus outward oriented (focused on reaching broader community)
- Dual aspects, one serving inward-oriented needs, another the outward aspect (becomes two worship services)

Kelly Fryer's research from her book *Reclaiming the "E" Word*

Successful evangelical churches:

- God is real to people
- The Bible provides the framework for everything they do
- Deep commitment to the Priesthood of all believers
- People and especially leaders are pragmatic. They are willing to do whatever it takes to reach new people
- They believe that God changes life, and they expect something to happen

Our Foundation

Review and Consider our Mission Statement:

To create a welcoming faith community called to love God, serve our neighbors and tell the story of Jesus Christ.

Love. Serve. Tell.

Our Guiding Principles:

As a congregation and as individuals:

- We are guided by the ministry of Jesus Christ.
- We uphold and support one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.
- We pursue and support lifelong spiritual growth.
- We work with others to strengthen community.
- We celebrate God's abundance by generously sharing our resources.
- We honor and care for God's creation.
- We are called by God to be courageous and flexible in an ever-changing world.

(Approved at the Annual Meeting, January 20, 2008.)

The intersection of hope and fear (poll of attendees about hopes and fears for the coming year)

Hope: More emphasis on whole food, local agriculture

Fear: Continue as a society to concentrate wealth into the top group of society and grow poverty

Hope: We find a stable foundation for growth in 2009

Fear: No change at the end of 2009

Hope: We will let God take care of divisions in the congregation

Fear: Uncontrolled dissension

Hope: Dynamic new efforts will give us direction

Fear: Too many ideas, nothing practical develops

Hope: Move past fear and take action - look at the bigger picture, and live/act with intent

Fear: Selfishness and apathy and refusal to listen obstruct what we need to change

Hope: More people will help clean up, find enough vets for pet clinic

Fear: Nobody will help clean up after fellowship, not enough vets will be found

Hope: We will continue to come together spiritually
Fear: We will be divided by material problems

Hope: We will find an accessible facility
Fear: Non-accessible facility will turn people away

Hope: Congregation grows in size and empathy
Fear: The economy, fatigue and discouragement lead to shrinking congregation

Hope: We will make a decision about where we will worship
Fear: We will lose people we love due to changes we make

Hope: Leaders and fellow members will be excited and want to be part of the new direction
Fear: We will get to the end of the year and not have done what we really wanted and were called to do

The group discussed how the Mission statement does and does not relate to our guiding principles. Dave Raymond discussed the difference between our “Big Vision” (our plans and goals for what we will become going forward), our Mission Statement (which reveals our “Guiding Principles” and varies in how much it directly drives practical planning and development) and the “Business Plan,” the church’s practical plans and strategies for achieving its vision while honoring its guiding principles.

We reviewed the role of the Council as defined by NECL’s constitution (see copy of relevant section in Appendix I at the end of this document).

Priorities for 2009

Priorities Brainstorm

- Adopt a good facility plan
- Two-way communication to reduce anxiety
- Adopt a responsible, sustainable financial plan
- Identify who we want to reach and serve
- Long range plan
- Community Engagement
- Effective fundraising
- Honor traditions and long term members
- Joyful, comfortable, meaningful and user-friendly worship
- Greater emphasis on kids and youth

Top priorities as captured by Dave Raymond after retreat, in order of priority:

1. Adopt Facility Plan
2. Adopt Financial Plan
3. Identify those in the community who we want to reach and serve
4. Advance worship
5. Community engagement (relates to 3 above)
6. Kids and Youth
7. Fundraising
8. Two-way communication to reduce fear of the future
9. Honor traditions and long-term members
10. Multi-year long range plan

First draft expansion of top priorities by Dave Raymond, for review and revision:

1. Adopt a plan for a facility that will effectively serve the congregation's mission.
2. Adopt a financial plan that will maximize the resources available to serve our mission within a balanced operating budget.
3. Identify the people in our community who God is calling us to serve, and get to know them so that NEC can reach and serve them.
4. Worship God in a joyful, meaningful, inspiring manner that is comfortable and welcoming for people in the community who we want to reach.

Effective Leadership in 2009

Presentation by Dan Scoggins:

Suggested model for a 2 hour Council Meeting

Complete the most important things first

- Devotions – 15 minutes
- Areas of Focus – reports from teams working on areas of focus. One page written reports. 60 minutes
- Treasury report – submitted in writing before the meeting via email. 5 minutes
- Secretary's report – submitted in writing before the meeting via email. 5 minutes
- Pastor's reports – submitted in writing before the meeting via email. 5 minutes
- New issues – submitted with recommendations, not questions. With proposed motions. 20 minutes. If a team who brings an issue to the council is not prepared, we will direct them to complete their recommendation, and then bring it back next month
- Closing prayer. Two hour meeting.

Meeting Focus

The role of the President is to preside over the meeting. This means set the agenda, and keep the meeting on track. I will do my best to do this in a loving way. Please support me when we do this so we complete our tasks in our time allotted.

Trust

Trust others to run the Sunday school, manage the church office, manage the community dinner. Questions of jurisdiction can be resolved by the staff team or only if necessary, the Council. The Council will not make many traditional decisions. We will trust other congregational members. As long as a team remains within their budget, they can do what they need to complete their mission.

Council Leadership - sets the tone for the Congregation

- We will be positive about our future. This is critical.
- We will support the decisions of the group even if we disagree - one face.
- We will listen to complaints with an open ear and thank people for their feedback. We will then direct the comments or complaints to the proper person to address it or see to it ourselves. We will then reply back to the person if needed.
- We will confront rumors with the truth

Communication

Everything we do as we complete the areas of focus will be communicated to the Congregation either in short announcements on Sunday mornings, or at informal congregational meetings after church.

Council Teams

Teams of Council members will support our areas of focus for 2009

Teams - to support our areas of focus

A team will be composed of two or three Council members and any additional congregation members the team includes. The teams should include additional congregation members. This group will use a consensus decision making model. The team may elect a leader who will lead the team. The team will be supported by our Consultant Dave Raymond who will provide all the research support necessary.

Process

1. Dave [Raymond] will provide all needed information, and put it in a format with clear options.
2. The group will then review and fully discuss the options.
3. The team will share their feedback and options with the congregation either at an informal congregational meeting or other method. This is very important.
4. After feedback is obtained, the team will make a recommendation to the Council
5. Each team will have 90 days to bring the recommendation to the Council
6. The Council will call a full congregational meeting if this is required or appropriate.

Time frame

Considering the dollar costs of time in our decision making process, we will work to make a final decision on each team's goal in 90 days or less. Each month costs \$10,000 of our endowment funds.

Reporting

The teams will report back to the Council at each monthly meeting. These reports will provide an overview, and any requests for resources, expenses, meetings - any council support we can provide. The council will support progress, listen to the work. The council will not micro-manage.

Credibility

Each team's work will have credibility if it is thorough, includes good congregational feedback, and is presented and explained well.

Leadership

We need each team to make decisions. Delaying will only increase the cost to the congregation. Delaying denies us opportunities to fix buildings, or sell buildings - these holding costs are huge.

Appendix I. NECL Constitution, sections related to Council

Chapter 12.

CONGREGATION COUNCIL

C12.01. The voting membership of the Congregation Council shall consist of the pastor(s), and not less than seven (7) or more than thirteen (13) members of the congregation. Any voting member of the congregation may be elected, subject only to the limitation on the length of continuous service permitted in that office. A member's place on the Congregation Council shall be declared vacant if the member a) ceases to be a voting member of this congregation or b) is absent from four successive regular meetings of the Congregation Council without cause, as determined by the Congregational Council. Consistent with the laws of the state in which this congregation is incorporated, the congregation may adopt procedures for the removal of a member of the Congregation Council in other circumstances.

C12.02. The members of the Congregation Council except the pastor(s) shall be elected by written ballot to serve for two (2) years or until their successors are elected, but elected in such a manner that after the first election, no more than one-half the members are elected each year. Such members shall be eligible to serve no more than three full terms consecutively. Their terms shall begin at the close of the annual meeting at which they are elected.

C12.03. Should a member's place on the Congregation Council be declared vacant, the Congregation Council shall elect, by majority vote, a successor until the next annual meeting. Individuals who have served less than one-half of a regular term shall be eligible for nomination and possible election to a full term.

C12.04. The Congregation Council shall have general oversight of the life and activities of this congregation, and in particular its worship life, to the end that everything be done in accordance with the Word of God and the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The duties of the Congregation Council shall include the following:

- a. To lead this congregation in stating its mission, to do long-range planning, to set goals and priorities, and to evaluate its activities in light of its mission and goals.
- b. To seek to involve all members of this congregation in worship, learning, witness, service, and support.
- c. To oversee and provide for the administration of this congregation to enable it to fulfill its functions and perform its mission.

d. To maintain supportive relationships with the pastor(s) and staff and help them annually to evaluate the fulfillment of their calling or employment.

e. To be examples individually and corporately of the style of life and ministry expected of all baptized persons.

f. To promote a congregational climate of peace and goodwill, and, as differences and conflicts arise, to endeavor to foster mutual understanding.

g. To arrange for pastoral service during the sickness or absence of the pastor.

h. To emphasize partnership with the synod and churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as well as cooperation with other congregations, both Lutheran and non-Lutheran, subject to established policies of the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

i. To recommend and encourage the use of program resources produced or approved by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

j. To seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel.

C12.05. The Congregation Council shall be responsible for the financial and property matters of this congregation.

a. The Congregation Council shall be the board of trustees of this congregation, and as such shall be responsible for maintaining and protecting its property and the management of its business and fiscal affairs. It shall have the powers and be subject to the obligations that pertain to such boards under the laws of the State of Minnesota, except as otherwise provided herein.

b. The Congregation Council shall not have the authority to buy, sell, or encumber real property unless specifically authorized to do so by a meeting of the congregation.

c. The Congregation Council may enter into contracts of up to \$ 5,000 for items not included in the budget.

d. The Congregation Council shall prepare an annual budget for adoption by this congregation, shall supervise the expenditure of funds in accordance therewith following its adoption, and may incur obligations of more than \$8,000 in excess of the anticipated receipts only after approval by a Congregation Meeting. The budget shall include this congregation's full indicated share in support of the wider ministry being carried on in partnership with the synod and churchwide organization.

e. The Congregation Council shall ascertain that the financial affairs of this congregation are being conducted efficiently, giving particular attention to the prompt

payment of all obligations and to the regular forwarding of benevolence monies to the synodical treasurer.

f. The Congregation Council shall be responsible for this congregation's investments and its total insurance program.

C12.06. The Congregation Council shall see that the provisions of this constitution, and its bylaws, and the continuing resolutions are carried out.

C12.07. The Congregation Council shall provide for an annual review of the membership roster.

C12.08. The Congregation Council shall be responsible for the employment and supervision of the salaried lay workers of this congregation.

C12.09. The Congregation Council shall submit a comprehensive report to this congregation at the annual meeting.

C12.11. The Congregation Council shall normally meet once a month. Special meetings may be called by the pastor or the president, and shall be called by the president at the request of at least one-half of its members. Notice of each special meeting shall be given to all who are entitled to be present.

C12.12. A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of a majority of the members of the Congregation Council; the pastor(s) will not count towards a quorum.