

## **Transforming for Mission Consultation**

Trinity Lutheran Church and Schools – Paso Robles, CA

June 6-8, 2014

### **INTRODUCTION:**

It has been a privilege to work with Pastors Dan Rowe and Steve Willweber, staff, leaders, and members of Trinity Lutheran Church and Schools. Everyone has been very helpful in providing us with the information that was necessary to conduct this consultation. Our prayers continue that the Lord will use this report to inspire the congregation to expand the Kingdom of God in this place.

### **STRENGTHS:**

**1. Missional Heart:** Members of Trinity are very involved with international and local mission projects. Trips are made to Mexico to build houses for the poor, Kyrgyzstan to teach English, and India to provide training and oversight for church workers. Members are also involved in many local missions such as Loaves & Fishes, Tree of Life Pregnancy Center, and Large Print. There is a congregation-wide sense of pride for mission work, and members are generous with their financial support for that work.

**2. Location and Facilities:** The members of Trinity have long understood that high quality, functional, and attractive grounds are a public reflection of their commitment to excellence. Their facilities work well for preschool and elementary education. The sanctuary provides a sense of reverence while offering adequate space for enhanced worship experiences. The congregation is open to the community using their grounds and buildings for meetings, concerts, and other community service events.

**3. Excellent Schools:** The preschool and elementary school are significant ministries and a blessing to Trinity. There is an emphasis on providing a solid Christian academic program. The staff is comprised of diligent people who genuinely demonstrate care for their students and families. Parents and students are encouraged to become involved in the school ministries through special projects at Christmas and throughout the year.

**4. Dedicated Staff:** There is a high degree of dedication within the staff. They care about the spiritual development of members, students, and the community. This is evidenced by their reliance on prayer, their sense of mission, and their passion for the lost. Even though they have individual personalities, they share in the goal that God's Word should be spread, and they do this using the unique gifts God has granted them.

**5. Potential for Growth:** Trinity has a great opportunity for the growth of its ministries. The church and schools are already blessed with an excellent reputation within the community. The preschool and school experience growth because the word has spread about their quality education. One member mentioned that even unchurched friends are aware of Trinity's positive involvement in the community. The multi-use facility and grounds provide sufficient space for expanded ministries. The beautiful sanctuary creates an inviting space for many new worship opportunities.

## **CONCERNS:**

**1. Lack of Unified Vision:** Trinity has many wonderful ministry activities but expressed no clear vision that would tie them together. The church ministry and school ministry lack a unified vision on how to enfold families into the kingdom of our Lord. Trinity's potential cannot be reached due to this "silo" mentality of ministry. In addition, some expressed a desire to have the vision expand, especially in the area of youth. A clear and compelling vision could energize members, direct their efforts toward a focused purpose, and provide information needed for any future staffing.

**2. Lack of Collaboration of Church and School Ministries:** Although the wounds that came out of the conflict in 2006 are definitely healing, residual scars exist which are evidenced by the disconnection between these ministries. Some positive steps have been taken to close this gap. The pastors regularly involve themselves in the daily activities of the school through greeting students and families in the morning and eating lunch with students. Some teachers are very active in church life through attendance, volunteerism, and leadership. However, these activities touch on only one aspect of collaboration. The missing components are: regular and comprehensive communication, routinely planned face-to-face meetings of the leaders of all entities, and intentional opportunities for fellowship. Investments like these will increase trust and respect and will also create an atmosphere of shared ministry.

**3. Inadequate Communication:** Communication issues seem to have a strangle hold on the ministries of Trinity. Expectations and misunderstandings have fostered some gossip, critical spirits, and lack of trust among ministries and individuals. Occasional breaches of confidentiality have eroded the willingness of some to be honest and open with those individuals. Factual knowledge of current ministry events or opportunities seems unavailable to both church members and school families. Some people spoke of being frustrated by not knowing to whom their concerns could be expressed, or how it happened that certain changes in systems were made. All the positive ministry efforts at Trinity could be enhanced with clearer communication.

**4. Ineffective Infrastructure:** Several members expressed frustration that there are areas within the ministry that seem to be unattended. Some of these are: absence of job descriptions for paid employees, need for review of the governance model, inadequate follow-up and care of visitors and lapsed members, lack of attention to the details in worship, and concerns about the effectiveness of the worship environment.

**5. Need for Increased Spiritual Vibrancy:** The staff and members of Trinity have a strong desire to grow in their discipleship. However, for some, especially younger people, this has not been translated into meaningful, inspiring worship and thus a corresponding enhanced connection to Jesus. "Inspiring worship" has been the lowest score on the Natural Church Development Survey since 2009 at Trinity. The Sunday worship experience is a key barometer of individual joy in the Lord and spiritual health. Even though the Bible is studied and preached, it must have an application to life. Without a vibrant, joyful, quality worship environment, some members and visitors do not return to worship. Several members spoke of "not being encouraged" by the current worship experience. This results in spiritual

lethargy, which leads to a lessened desire to volunteer, low motivation to attend Bible study, and lack of joy in life.

## **PRESCRIPTIONS:**

**1. Unified Vision:** Under the leadership of Pastor Rowe and in collaboration with the Mission and Ministry Council and District Staff, Trinity Lutheran Ministries will develop a clear unified vision. A “Vision Team” of at least 5 individuals will be formed in addition to Pastor Rowe. This team will include Principal Fairbank, a member of the SAT, and a member of the MAT. The Team will be in place by September 15, 2014 and a process and schedule communicated to the congregation and schools by November 1, 2014. The Visioning process will be completed and approved by the congregation by June, 8, 2015.

**2. Church and Schools Staff Relationships:** Pastor Rowe and Principal Fairbank will meet with a member of the District Staff in a one day workshop to develop a strategy for strengthening staff relationships and in doing so, begin strengthening the foundation of unity and collaboration between church and school ministries. This strategy will include, but not be limited to, professional growth, fellowship, and Bible study/prayer/devotional events. This strategy workshop will occur before August 15, 2014 and the strategy submitted to the Mission and Ministry Council by September 1, 2014. In May of 2015 a debriefing event will be held, led by a District representative, to evaluate relationship development and propose next steps in the strengthening of Church/School relationships. The results of this debriefing will be shared by Pastor Rowe and Principal Fairbank at the Mission and Ministry Council in June of 2015 and communicated to the congregation within 30 days.

**3. Communication Audit:** Under the leadership of Pastor Rowe a “Communication Audit Team” of at least five members will be formed. A member of the Mission and Ministry Council will lead the team in consultation with District staff. The job of this team will be to look at the communication process of Trinity Lutheran Ministries (verbal, written, and electronic) among church, school/preschool, Mission and Ministry Council, school/preschool families, congregational members, and the community. This audit team will be in place by September 15, 2014 and make their report with recommendations to the Mission and Ministry Council by November 15, 2014 and communicate their report to the congregation within 30 days.

**4. Infrastructure Review:** Under the leadership of Pastor Rowe, the Mission and Ministry Council will establish four subcommittees to review the following management areas: 1) Worship service mechanics, 2) Member and visitor care and follow up systems, 3) Governance system as it is currently being implemented, and 4) Job descriptions for pastors and all staff. These subcommittees will be led by Mission and Ministry Council members who may recruit their own committee members and be encouraged to seek assistance from District staff as well as any local resources. These subcommittees will be established by September 15, 2014 and make their reports with recommendations to the Mission and Ministry Council by January 15, 2015 and communicate these reports to the congregation within 30 days.

**5. Increased Level of Inspiration in Worship:** Under the leadership of Pastor Rowe, the Mission and Ministry Council will establish a “Worship Development Team.” This team will be led by a member of the Mission and Ministry Council, have at least three members, none of whom are ordinarily involved in music or other aspects of worship, but have an interest in the same. The job of this team is to review and make recommendations for making the worship experiences at Trinity the best possible for current worshipers as well as visitors. This review will include, but not be limited to, music, congregational singing, structure/liturgies, visual art, sermons, congregational interaction, and the overall worship environment. This team will be encouraged to use District and other resources. They may make initial reports and recommendations to the Mission and Ministry Council and Pastor Rowe as they see fit, and will make a complete report and recommendations before Easter of 2015 and communicate this report to the congregation within 30 days.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Other strengths and concerns were expressed over our time with you. We have chosen to highlight the ones with the highest priority from our point of view. Other issues will be addressed informally during our ongoing relationship should you chose to accept this report.

We ask the congregation to vote on accepting or rejecting this report by July 20, 2014. If the report is accepted, the District commits to “walk alongside” Trinity Lutheran Church for a minimum of one year to help in implementing the prescriptions. Trinity Lutheran Church will agree to support their pastors in the CoachNet coaching process as well as other resources identified for staff encouragement and professional development.

The Transforming for Mission team recognizes the courage exhibited by Pastor Rowe, Pastor Willweber, staff, leaders, and members by engaging in this consultation. The team wishes to emphasize the serious nature of the challenges that the congregation faces now and in the future in this changing world. There is a call to respond, not with anxiety, but with continued prayer, innovation, resolve, and nourishment in God’s Word. The same Lord who has been with you in your past will continue to be with you in your future.

We thank you for the opportunity to consult with you. It was a blessing to be the recipients of your personal sharing. Our prayers are with you as you consider these prescriptions. We hope to be working with you as you touch the people of your surrounding community with God’s love.

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