



Pastor Sorensen's September First of the Month Letter

On the last Saturday of August, nineteen members of Christ Lutheran gathered to pray, to listen, to discern and to dream. The group was made up of members of the Church Board, Call Committee, Transition Team, and Finance Team.

Using a process called 'Open Space,' the day started with a blank agenda. The first task was to identify important topics that shape the present and future of this congregation. They identified 26 items, which were then grouped into five categories for discussion. I want to briefly share with you those five areas of conversation.

Debt/Finances/Campus Maintenance. This conversation focused on the need to better communicate with the congregation our current mortgage obligations (\$930,000 debt), to better communicate ongoing maintenance issues (leaking roof over library, aging HVAC), and to begin exploration of whether a campus improvement/debt reduction capital campaign is in CLC's future. There is a long, detailed conversation involving the whole congregation before a decision about a capital campaign is reached, but in the short term look for more communication around campus maintenance issues and costs.

Ministries. The group who explored this topic brainstormed about how to improve our relationship with existing ministry partners, and perhaps expand with new partners. Becoming more involved with My Father's House was one idea, while exploring partnering with Living Waters and well construction projects in Central America was another. This group also wondered how we can better communicate to the community our commitment to 'radical acceptance' as expressed in the mission statement. Again, the need to over-communicate with the congregation the wide and varied aspects of our local and global ministries was expressed.

Diversity. There was a strong sense that the core value of *Embrace Diversity* is not a slogan for a banner but a deep guiding principle to challenge existing norms. Do we need to examine our current avenues of publicity and make changes in order to reach a more diverse part of the Visalia community? What changes are necessary to truly embrace the underserved and underrepresented communities in our county while letting all know we are here and all are welcome? This group began asking tough questions that will need to be answered if CLC faithfully embraces diversity.

Fellowship. Fellowship efforts of the congregation, such as JPEG, work well for those who are already involved. But the current fellowship offerings are not meeting the needs of many in the congregation. A laundry list of ideas was created, but ultimately fellowship will grow out of relationships. Better relationships lead to better communication, which leads to better understanding of the needs of the CLC community. This is the work of the core value *Build Community*.

Children/Student/Young Adult/Family Ministries. There is a passion for children, youth, and young adults to have a vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ. How the congregation pursues that passion is an ever-evolving ministry strategy, because the lives of children, youth, young adults, and families are always changing. This group, like fellowship, created a list of possibilities. But ultimately, it was agreed that youth and family ministries cannot be outsourced to a few staff members but must be wholly 'owned and operated' by the entire congregation.

I haven't even begun to share with you what was discussed at lunch and in the afternoon...but this will be enough for now. I continue to give thanks to God for such a faithful group of congregational leaders. This congregation is richly blessed with passionate leaders, who love Jesus, love this church, and love one another. This is a solid foundation as you boldly discern and walk into God's preferred and promised future for Christ Lutheran Church.

See you in worship,

Pastor Scot