

Peace Lutheran Church, Ft. Myers
Mission/Planning Retreat—part 2
October 24, 2019
Facilitated by Sr. Michelle Collins, Florida-Bahamas Synod

Introduction:

This was the second part of the retreat that was held in August. A different group of people attended this retreat, many of whom were not present at the retreat in August. The purpose of this retreat was to:

- 1) Review what we began at the Aug. 15 retreat, and reflect on what we've heard since then
- 2) Move closer to claiming a set of core values for Peace and begin defining those core values
- 3) Move towards clarifying key priorities for ministry that will inform an ongoing mission plan

Mission Insite and Demographics

The retreat began with a brief review of the demographic reports for the community, given by Pr. Walter Still. The summary of the demographic reports are that the population will continue to be primarily older adults, with a slight rise in families with school-age children over the next ten years. But the primary demographic for the area will continue to be older adults. This is an important reality to keep in mind when continuing the discussion about mission/purpose/vision.

Dwelling in the Word

We began by dwelling in Luke 4:16-30, which is commonly viewed as the verses where Jesus articulates his mission/purpose and vision for ministry (for both himself and for the church). In reflecting on these verses, there was a strong affirmation that the purpose/mission of the church today *does* have something to do with the purpose/mission Jesus lifted up in that passage.

Reviewing where we left off/reviewing the mission and purpose statements

Since this was Part 2 of the conversation that began in August, we did some review of that retreat and discussed what additional feedback was requested/received from that retreat. The action items at the end of the retreat in August had to do with doing more active listening to get a broader sense of feedback about the proposed list of values and priorities. The participants were not clear how that feedback was collected—if at all—and were not clear on what has been heard from that active listening. In reviewing the mission/purpose statement, the group affirmed that both the current mission statement and the current purpose statement for Peace compel the congregation to be about some of the same things Jesus talked about (physically and metaphorically)—sight for the blind, release for the captive, etc. There were some suggestions about adjusting some of the language of the mission statement, focusing on the idea that the current language might not compel action/response (full suggestion in the NOTES section). But generally the agreement was the statements currently say what needs to be said about the mission/purpose of the congregation and connect (or can connect) with the purpose/vision articulated by Jesus.

Affirming/Clarifying Core Values

In August, a longer list of core values was lifted up. To affirm/clarify that list and prioritize it a little bit, the group went through an exercise where they grouped themselves according to values that were related. Each group then chose a 'family name'—or a value that served as a heading for all the values in that group. In this way, the list of 16 values was condensed into 3 primary groups: spiritual formation, generosity, and relationships (full list in NOTES).

With affirmation of those top 3 values, we moved into forming some sense of action about how we see those values *working*. That resulted in the following sentences:

We nurture **Spiritual Formation**.

We expect & practice **respectful relationships**.

We embrace responsible generosity.

As a way of connecting values with program and priorities, the group expanded those values sentences to add some specific ways these values currently are being expressed.

We nurture Spiritual Formation through:

- Meaningful worship, music and arts
- Intentional education opportunities that are relevant to mature adults
- Tending to wholistic care (i.e. columbarium, pastoral care, parish nurse, prayer shawls, communion visitation, BeFriends)

We expect & practice respectful relationships through:

- Active and objective listening (open, non-judgmental)
- Welcoming/greeting anyone who comes in the door
- Volunteering and offering time/talents
- Fostering ecumenical and community partnership

We embrace responsible generosity through:

- Financial stewardship
- Legacy foundation
- Community outreach programs
- Supply/food collections and volunteer opportunities
- Giving of time

This kind of emphasis on values, and expressing programming as an expression of values, could continue to guide the congregation in conversation about ministry strength and direction.

Naming priorities for ministry into the future

One of the original intentions of this retreat was to inform a broader mission plan conversation. In the time between the first retreat and the second retreat, the congregation received notice of their pastor's retirement. This information adjusts the timing of the mission plan process. While the core values and related statements and evaluation can be helpful in informing the transition process, putting some specific language in place about objectives and goals is more the role of the next pastor. So, the group did not feel equipped to have definitive or decisive conversation about the brainstormed ideas from August relating to specific goals for the future. Those ideas and notes can be preserved and can inform the leadership (including the next pastor).

Conclusion and Next Steps

The participants were comfortable with the three statements of core value, but acknowledged that the group was a small representation of the whole congregation. The content of the retreat was recommended to the leadership for further conversation, but was considered a consistent summary of how those present understand the heart and commitment of Peace Lutheran Church.

NOTES

Current statements (suggested edits in bold)

Peace Lutheran Church exists to equip **(deploy, and multiply?)** disciples of Jesus Christ for ministry and mission **(to be/bring good news to our world)**.

The purpose of Peace Lutheran Church is to be a powerful force for good in Southwest Florida.

Values from Aug. retreat:

- Older adults
- Hospitality
- Joyful & playful
- Liturgical/worship
- Education & study
- Prayerful
- Respect and Reverence
- Community
- Cooperation
- Innovation
- Generosity
- Frugality
- Caring
- Music
- Trust
- Connectedness/accompaniment (relevance, wisdom, serving, partnerships)

Combining values into groups

Spiritual Formation:

- Prayerful
- Education & study
- Music
- Liturgical/worship
- Innovation
- Reverence
- Joyful

Respect in Relationship:

- Community
- Connectedness/accompaniment
- Innovation
- Cooperation
- Caring
- Older adults
- Trust
- Respect
- Innovation
- Reputation

Generosity/frugality:

Actions words for each value:

- Spiritual formation: embrace, nurture, enjoy, work, practice
- Respectful Relationship: honor, expect, choose, practice

- Wisely stewarded/responsible generosity: pursue, practice, embrace, manifest

Expanded value statements

We nurture **Spiritual Formation** through:

- Meaningful worship, music and arts
- Intentional education opportunities that are relevant to mature adults
- Tending to wholistic care (i.e. columbarium, pastoral care, parish nurse, prayer shawls, communion visitation, BeFriends)

We expect & practice **respectful relationships** through:

- Active and objective listening (open, non-judgmental)
- Welcoming/greeting anyone who comes in the door
- Volunteering and offering time/talents
- Fostering ecumenical and community partnership

We embrace **responsible generosity** through:

- Financial stewardship
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- Giving of time