

**Peace Lutheran Church, Ft. Myers**  
**Core Values Retreat, Part 1**  
**Aug. 15, 2019**  
**Facilitated by Sr. Michelle Collins**

**Introduction:**

Peace Lutheran Church is a medium-size congregation beginning to generate conversation about the future. It is a stable, healthy congregation that experiences growth during the winter and maintains strong programs for both an internal and external audience. This retreat was held to begin articulating core values as the congregation imagines its future. The goals for the retreat were identified as:

- 1) Connect our story to God's story
- 2) Introduce core values and understand their role in vision and mission
- 3) Begin articulating core values for Peace
- 4) Begin connecting values and vision for mission
- 5) Articulate next steps in an ongoing visioning process

**Bible Study: Connecting to God's story**

We began by considering God's story...what IS God's story? Do we know it well enough to tell it to someone who doesn't know it? In groups, we read passages in Acts and John, asking the questions: What is God doing? What are people doing? We then came together and asked What can the church (then and today) learn (full notes in NOTES section). We identified connections between what God is doing in these passages and what God has been doing in this congregation and in our lives.

**Vision and Values (What do we Believe?)**

Core Values are statements of conviction that inform behavior. They are those convictions that are core and essential to identity in a person or a group. Statements of core values in a congregation are statements that:

1. Reflect what is basic and important to a congregation
2. Define identity and character
3. Are true despite individual leaders
4. Guide decisions and actions
5. Convey what a congregation stands for

When a congregation has clearly defined core values, they can come together around ideas and strategies for experimentation and growth in different ways. They have tools to use to navigate disagreements, to navigate the use of resources, and to navigate leadership needs. When a congregation has clearly defined core values that connects with God's mission/vision/action in the world, a congregation can more clearly evaluate the specific ways they are being called to live in to God's mission. Without a clearly defined set of core values, direction and disagreement can be dictated by personal opinion, personal interest, and personality.

We discussed the 'cultural iceberg,' and considered what the 'above the water' behaviors would be that define this congregation, and what the 'under the water beliefs' would be that inform those behaviors. Through an exercise of sorting values and identifying those that 'sound like us,' the group worked together to discern what some core values of Peace are. A full list of potential values was compiled (included in the NOTES section). This list will continue to be part of discussion in the congregation, and the second retreat will involve narrowing the list and defining the values in connection with the emerging mission and vision at Peace.

### **Values and Mission (How does what we believe inform what we do?)**

With a beginning list of values, we had some discussion about the purpose/mission of the church, based on what we notice God doing in scripture, what we notice people doing in scripture, and what we are beginning to say about what the core values for this congregation are. This initial work on a sense of purpose/mission will also continue, and will be part of the second retreat. Full NOTES included.

Moving from purpose to planning and vision, we imagined what the mission of this congregation would look like in 3-5 years if the congregation was fully demonstrating its core values through its mission. We asked the question, "what headlines might you see in 3-5 yrs?" and brainstormed ways these values could be demonstrated in programs and ministry. Full NOTES included. These headlines will continue to be part of discussion, and might guide the conversation about strategic priorities over the next several years.

### **Next Steps and Lingering Questions**

This retreat was the beginning of a conversation that will need to continue before there is a sense of resolution or conclusion. But at this point, some of the next steps identified were:

- ➔ Begin noticing and discussion connections between external behaviors and internal beliefs
- ➔ Find ways to get input from those in the congregation not at this retreat
- ➔ Find ways to get input from the community (those impacted by our values and mission/purpose)

Some lingering questions (about this or about ministry at Peace generally) include:

- ➔ How do we engage others?
  - Invite others into discussions about future ministry, vision, etc?
  - Involve invite others into both planning and executing?
- ➔ How do we make the vision compelling?
- ➔ What are the implications for us with seasonal realities?
  - How do we energize/equip visitors for their 'other' home?
- ➔ What are the reasonable limits on this vision/these ideas?

There was some discussion about some follow-up events for discussion:

- Fall (w/seasonal guests)
- Winter
- Wed. Nov. 20 (10:00-20:00) is the next retreat

One immediate next step was to include a brief (but substantial) summary in “Dovetails”. Lizz, Pr. Still, Mary & Lisa were tasked with this action item.

### **Conclusion and Observations**

Peace is a stable congregation that has experienced significant growth over the last several years. It is aware of its context in south Florida and committed to clarifying a focus of ministry for and with older adults. The group gathered seemed to include significant leaders in the congregation, but many noticed that the size of the group was small compared to the size of the congregation. Getting feedback and input from others will continue to be important. The congregation is to be affirmed for engaging in this discussion about core values, vision, mission and possibilities for the future at a time other than a season of crisis or transition. By engaging in this conversation now, there are good opportunities for renewal and revitalization.

As the congregation engages this process, it will be important for everyone to surround the conversation about mission, values, and vision in prayer and study of God’s Word.

## NOTES

### **Bible Study**

What are parts of God's Story

It is good

Guidance through adversity

Jesus

Scriptures read:

Acts 2:1-10

Acts 10:1-

#### **What is God doing?**

- equipping people to go into the world
- Sending messengers to Gentiles
- Sending messengers to Peter (religious leader)
- Communicating through dreams and visions
- Turning upside down common beliefs
- Defining Jesus for the people (logos, light)
- Coming into the world

#### **What are people doing?**

- Telling their story of Jesus
- Obeying God's word and direction
- Challenging/breaking "status quo"
- Obey...go out and find people
- Point people to God
- Have a conversation
- Some are called and bathed in the light; some don't accept

#### **What can the church learn?**

- God is working through us!
- What we do is important
- Who we reach out to is important
- Don't be afraid of being shaken up
- Pay attention to the dream God might be planting
- Don't get up on "the way we've done it before"
- "rules" change



### List of values

- 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)

### God's purpose for the church is:

- To tell/speak about the love of God through actions, words & people
- To witness, and to share God's love through loving service to one another
- To love one another, worship God, grow and learn, and serve all
- To share and live God's word

### The mission of Peace is (current statement):

To equip disciples of Jesus Christ for ministry and mission

### The Purpose of Peace is (current statement):

To be a powerful force for good in Southwest Florida

### 3-5 Years from now, what do you want newspaper headlines to be that will reflect values, mission and purpose of Peace?

- Senior Center Expands
- Columbarium/memorial garden available
- Social Services Improve lives in S. Ft. Myers
- Peace Opens New Senior Center in Partnerships
- Walls Overflowing with love and service to the community

- Innovative Education programs impact community
- Prayer program highlights respectful reverence
- Worship with us to connect Sunday to Monday
- Peace dedicates \$20 million organ
- Hospitality engages older adults in worship