

AUGUST 2023

STRATEGIC PLAN 2.0 “NEXT STEPS”

ONE YEAR LATER

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church

SUMMER 2023

ONE YEAR LATER

Thanks to a ReKindle Congregational Development Program grant of \$15,000 from Columbia Theological Seminary, Holy Trinity commissioned a Strategic Plan 2.0 process to determine our “next steps” as a congregation. Five teams met together from September 2021 until April 2022 to study the vision/mission, review Strategic Plan 1.0, and discern future ministries. These teams were 1) Welcome Team, 2) Worship Team, 3) Respond Team, 4) Children, Youth and Family Ministries Team, and 5) Facilities Team.

As part of the process, HTLC conducted a congregation wide survey and hosted multiple listening sessions pertaining to each of these five realms of ministry. The end result of this Strategic Plan 2.0 process was each of these five teams presenting two recommendations for future church ministries: 1) an “investment” recommendation, which chose to reinvest in an already existing ministry, and 2) an “innovation” recommendation, which would recommend a new ministry opportunity. On April 3rd, 2023, Holy Trinity gathered to receive these 10 final recommendations.

The following report is a “check-in” after approximately one year, to see how these 10 “next steps” have progressed since then.

WELCOME

1) CONNECTION AND COMMUNITY AROUND FOOD

Investment Recommendation Description: Everyone has a place at God's table! This recommendation seeks to invest in increased opportunities to connect over food and fellowship. Food is a universal love language. Because we value community, inclusivity, and authenticity, we propose that we have periodic "Breakfast Sundays", and we explore pre-made meals for homebound members, new parents, and those recovering from surgery or illness. We would also love to provide more theme nights, incorporate diversity of culture, and host "how-to" lessons for making lefse, kolacky, or Jell-O!

One Year Later Update: Holy Trinity has stated that one of the most profound ways to welcome people is through a shared meal. While the energy for increased food opportunities was palpable, an initial team to create such events has dissipated a bit, and merged into the already existing kitchen team. A desire to host periodic "Breakfast Sundays" was met with volunteer hesitation, especially considering current space limitations. Instead, under the leadership of Donna Galvin, the staff initiated a new and coordinated monthly ministry model called "Grow and Gather", which included adult Bible study, a student faith milestone, a Compline worship service, and a shared meal for all. Another successful experiment was a Mardi Gras themed senior luncheon, where a large group of seniors gathered for conversation, entertainment, and a shared meal. In addition, Laurie Thorp initiated a Spring Tea event, and the Random Acts of Kindness Team initiated a "puzzles and pizza" event. Other classes and theme nights were pursued, but not implemented. In the future, there remain aspirations for teaching opportunities, as well as increased intentionality to provide pre-made meals for homebound members, new parents, or those recovering from illness or surgery.

2) CREATE A WELCOME TEAM

Innovation Recommendation Description: All are welcome! This is a fundamental aspect of our mission. This recommendation seeks to create a team who would take leadership on reaching out to new community members (people who have recently moved to New Prague and surrounding communities) and invite them to worship/attend HTLC. This group would also tend to the Welcome Center, prepare packets to give to people visiting HTLC, participate in New Member classes and engagement opportunities, implement the "First 5 Rule", and ensure all are truly welcome at Holy Trinity.

One Year Later Update: A Welcome Team was developed, led by Jamie Bisek. Team members include Joel Loose, Scott Mackenthun, and Laurie Thorp. This team has helped with new member gatherings and implemented a ministry overview brochure to distribute at public events (such as Czech out New Prague). This team also delivered snacks to the GSA group at the high school, and did extensive research on inclusivity branding, interviewing other congregations that have become Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregations. The Reconciling in Christ process warrants leadership discernment, but the pursuit of this symbology has temporarily been paused. Today, this Welcome Team helps at Jamie's request, and meets bi-annually to discern how to provide a welcoming presence at community events.

WORSHIP

3) WORSHIP ENHANCEMENTS

Investment Recommendation Description: The heart of our identity is as a worshiping community gathered around Word and Sacrament. This recommendation endeavors to enhance worship experiences within the sanctuary walls. We love our sanctuary and want to explore ways to enhance the space we currently have. We will research colorful banners and backlighting around the sanctuary to brighten up the brick walls and altar. We will seek to explain the purposes and history of significant people and days within the worship calendar, all of which to imbue members with lifelong, bedrock concepts of the Lutheran faith. Lastly, we will pursue hosting regular music events that invite guest musicians within our community and region, as well as host “open mic” opportunities to unite the generations and share a variety of musical genres.

One Year Later Update: See below.

4) DEVELOP LITURGICAL ARTS MINISTRIES

Innovation Recommendation Description: Our worship has personality to it, and we strive to engage a variety of means to help people build a meaningful, close relationship with God. At its heart, this initiative offers a vehicle to create dynamic worship experiences. We seek to explore dramatic readings, liturgical dance, theater opportunities, or other artistic elements that would foster an engagement with the creativity of the Spirit. We understand the rich, historical context of our church’s history, and feel compelled to expand modern worship expressions through liturgical arts. In response to our congregational survey, this recommendation responds to the need for people to be involved and see their faith “come alive.”

One Year Later Update: After the commissioning of the 10 “next steps”, both the “Worship Enhancement” and “Develop Liturgical Arts Ministries” recommendations decided to unite for a coordinated approach. A team of Jackie Mackenthun (temporary chair), Mary Hanson-Busch, Brian & Leanne Gieseke, and Marlys Johnson generated worthy ideas for development and implementation. One of the noteworthy early efforts was to look into improved acoustic experience within the sanctuary. A thorough report was generated and submitted for future consideration.

While the work of an official worship “next step” team has paused, there have been additional developments within the worship ministries that have aligned with these

Strategic Plan 2.0 recommendations. An experimental monthly Compline service was launched, focused on curating a reflective and contemplative worship environment that involves a network of Holy Trinity musicians. In 2022, efforts were made to include liturgical dancers within worship. In December 2022, various Worship Team participants were invited to a roundtable discussion with Station 19 Architects to inform the worship considerations within the comprehensive site plan. Within this comprehensive site plan, the importance of worship was emphasized. In August 2023, Christa Smith was hired to coordinate the network of musicians who regularly contribute to worship.

RESPOND

5) INVEST IN HIGH SCHOOL MINISTRIES

Investment Recommendation Description: In gratitude to God's grace, we cannot help but respond to the evolving needs of our greater community. After the past couple years, we hear the recurring theme that high school age students need a safe, healthy, and faith-filled community. We seek to build a robust youth group that brings teens together from all religious/ unchurched backgrounds. This would be a group that not only provides faith formation opportunities, but also a space for teens to sing, play games, learn kindness, enhance leadership skills, and become positive contributors to the community.

One Year Later Update: Following the congregational huddle, a group of people expressed interest to invest in high school ministries. While this particular team hasn't assembled, there have certainly been developments with high school ministries. On a weekly basis, Lauren Petersen has provided a safe and meaningful gathering opportunity for high school students called Agape. In addition, the monthly Compline service was first imagined as a high school ministry opportunity, but has since transitioned into an intergenerational worship event. This spring, an ecumenical group, which included good Holy Trinity representation gathered to learn of the possibility of a New Prague branch of the para-church ministry called Young Life.

6) FORM A RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS TEAM

Innovation Recommendation Description: With loving hearts and helpful hands, we are called to work together to contribute to the good of the world. We aim to develop a team that stands ready to respond to needs that arise. Examples include, but certainly are not limited to the following: paying negative balances on lunch accounts, sending Valentine's to the newly widowed, lending a helping hand to elders with yard/snow clean-up, or hosting short-term stays to someone in need. In addition, this group will be proactive in spreading God's love, by touching the lives of others through good deeds and planned tokens of appreciation.

One Year Later Update: A Random Acts of Kindness (RAOK) Team was launched with much interest. Led by Gina Fadden and Heather Nybo, over 25 people participated in this team. Many ideas were generated, and in 2022 the focus was on serving the external community. For idea generation, the RAOK team reached out to the schools, police department, medical community, etc. In response, 600 cards of encouragement were sent to school district teachers and staff. Care packages were created for those facing difficult times. Money was donated to the angel fund, assisting families in the community in need of assistance paying for meals. Items were donated to the social workers at the schools. There was a T-shirt fundraiser in October which raised \$400. In December, the team helped Pastor Diane Goulson put together 50 blankets for the Santa Anonymous Adopt-a-Family program in Le Seuer County.

In January, the evolving congregational needs instigated a shift from external community support to internal community building. To start, the RAOK team did "Operation Help Your Neighbor", and made social media posts in advance of winter storms. In February, the team worked the kitchen so the kitchen team could participate in the Mardi Gras senior luncheon. In March, RAOK hosted a "pizza and puzzles" event and in April collaborated with the spring tea event. In the summer, RAOK planned to host "beach blast" events corresponding with Holy Trinity Lakeside services. This team has also been writing "welcome" cards to new member families.

CYF MINISTRIES

7) FORM A YOUTH MINISTRY TEAM

Investment Recommendation Description: Our vision is to share God's love for all people from one generation to the next. This recommendation seeks to identify and invite team members to match their strengths and talents with our age group needs (PreK-5, Confirmation, HS). This team will provide support to the Pastors/CYF Director in recruiting, training and supporting volunteers, and creating a curriculum that includes a yearly scope and sequence with foundational learning targets (i.e. Lord's Prayer, 10 Commandments, etc.). This team will also ensure activities/events that will engage students in fellowship with their peers and foster intergenerational connections. Lastly, this group will conduct an annual review/evaluation cycle for the curriculum, and make adjustments as needed.

One Year Later Update: A Youth Ministry Team was formed, consisting of Kate Kienow (chair), Cassie Olson, Tara Duering, Hannah Weiers, and Lauren Petersen. They have met monthly, and represent different ages of ministries. This team is considering ways to include new team members and allow for transitions in a sustainable way. Highlights of the past year include (but are not limited to):

- Boosted support for volunteer recruitment, with presence at volunteer training events and updates to child protection policy training materials.
- Improved confirmation experience through a mixed-gendered, intergenerational mentor model for small groups, and a collaborative approach to reviewing sermon notes.
- A consistent Crew Time model for both Sundays and Wednesdays, prioritizing students participating in worship and yet allowing for age-specific learning opportunities.
- Increased emphasis on social opportunities for parents of those ages birth- 3 years of age through "Sunday Funday" events.
- Support and encouragement for various CYF ministries, including but not limited to Vacation Bible School, Crew Time, Confirmation, Agape, Faith Milestones and special holiday events.

8) REVAMP YOUTH MINISTRY SPACES

Innovation Recommendation Description: The results of the 2022 CAT survey state the greatest needs of our people are multi-generational education and connectivity. The youth of our church need a visual representation of our commitment to their education. We are eager to create a more welcoming and exciting environment for our youth to learn. We hope to provide flexible seating options for Crew Time spaces, add pictures of youth/activities/ drawings to youth spaces, and create middle school/high school spaces where autonomy is embraced and they can create a sense of ownership for their space. These actions will validate the importance our congregation has placed on youth and their development.

One Year Later Update: A Youth Ministry Spaces Revamp team was developed, led by Christie Will, and included Mandi Becher, Cory Magnuson, Deb Miller, Lauren Petersen, and Emmy Will. This team made temporary but immediate upgrades: including rearranging the Agape room, organizing the youth ministry closet space, changing Luther Lounger area to a game room, making an outdoor gaga pit, and adding chalkboards to the assorted confirmation classrooms. They also worked collaboratively with the strategic master plan (as detailed under the “What’s Next” report) alongside the leadership of the “Kitchen Update” team and the “Make it Grand” team.

FACILITIES

9) UPDATE THE KITCHEN FACILITY

Investment Recommendation Description: Facility needs follow ministry needs. At Holy Trinity, we value community, because God has created us to be in relationship with one another. Much of the fellowship of the church revolves around food. In conjunction with the recommendation to increase meal opportunities, we seek to update the kitchen equipment and decor (to match the new addition) and reconfigure the space for better flow, which would enable the kitchen team to serve a larger number of people more efficiently.

One Year Later Update: A robust and energetic team was developed, led by Barb Niemeyer, with a goal to create a kitchen that is able to serve up to 300 people. This team included Jon Bergquist, Darbie Berger, Donna Galvin, Steph Galvin, Audre Johnson, Shirley & Jerry Privratsky, Joanne Reemts, Dave & Donna Vaupel, Trudy Wegman, and George Winn. While it's difficult to contain the excitement about updating the kitchen, the team has been patient to work within a comprehensive strategic master plan for the site development. In the meantime, the intentionality regarding space efficiency has led to the instigation of food preparation stations and a more organized kitchen layout. A highlight of this team's work was their kitchen plan drawn to scale on an 8ft foam insulation board and presented to Station 19 Architects (as detailed under the "What's Next..." report).

10) MAKE IT GRAND RENOVATION

Innovation Recommendation Description: Holy Trinity believes “All are Welcome.” We want our building to show that. Our current building layout has been compared to a maze or labyrinth with poorly marked entrances. Our outside sign might say, “All are welcome,” but our building says, “we’re going to make you guess how to get in and then not tell you where to go.” A church entrance needs to boldly declare, “You are welcome here, and THIS is how you get in!” This recommendation seeks to form a team to create a “grand entrance” which would address the layout and flow of the building. Holy Trinity values community, and we hope this grand entrance could encourage connectivity amongst our people. We envision that this grand entrance would have clear sightlines upon entrance, outdoor patio/sitting areas, indoor seating vignettes, all within the context of historical preservation of our church.

One Year Later Update: A diversified “Make it Grand” team spent the beginning of the 2022 summer identifying a clear main entrance and intuitive way-finding. This team consisted of Laura Magnuson (chair), Jed Becher, Dirk Berger, Nate Borwege, Adam Cornell, Mike Cloutier, Ann Gengel, Chris Hauck, Dennis Jasperson, Derek Lamb, Darcey Schoenebeck, Dan Smith, Nate Smithson, and Barb Warner. A key outcome was alignment on the location of Door 2 as the main entrance for future development.

A concern was expressed about the terminology regarding the word, “grand”, as it can have a perceived boastful connotation. The term shifted to include language of a “primary” entrance, where an intuitive primary entrance would be kind to newcomers.

WHAT'S NEXT...

With the leadership of Laura Magnuson and councilperson Chris Hauck, the close partnership of Barb Niemeyer and Christie Will, and the collaboration with representatives from other leadership teams, following a congregational vote on Nov. 13, 2022, Holy Trinity hired Station 19 Architects to develop a comprehensive strategic master plan. Through December 2022, Station 19 Architects hosted various listening sessions to determine how the facility master plan can align with current and projected future needs. Station 19 also made Holy Trinity aware of the size limitations of the current sanctuary as well as the lack of a community gathering space (or lobby/narthex). The end result was a conceptual strategic master plan that was presented at the January annual meeting, discussed at ten round table opportunities in February, and brought to life through a model made by Dave Vaupel, Lynn Johnson, Pat Remfert and Joel Larsen. On April 12, 2023, Holy Trinity overwhelmingly voted to approve moving to the next step in the design process and to develop a more defined budget.

In the summer of 2023, a General Contractor Selection Team (consisting of Laura Magnuson, Chris Hauck, Nate Borwege, Derek Lamb, and Bob Nelson) went through a deliberate and thorough general contractor selection process, and recommended Langer Construction to the church council.

Holy Trinity is now working to refine the plans to be more cost effective, and developing a capital campaign model that can reflect a base project with stretch goals. A Campaign Leadership Team has been working behind the scenes to discern the capacity of the congregation, and the Finance Team has been working to recommend a financing approach that won't inhibit future ministries. The church council regularly monitors developments and ensures alignment. The evolution of the master plan will be presented at launch events on Sept. 27 and Oct. 1, 2023, where the congregation will be invited to pledge to financially support the building updates. In January 2024, the congregation will vote to proceed with the proposed project.

CLOSING REMARKS

Over the course of the past year, much good work has been done to help Holy Trinity take faithful “next steps” in mission and ministry. While some efforts have been quicker than others to launch into the tasks at hand, Holy Trinity is following through with the recommendations discerned through the Strategic Plan 2.0 process. As Holy Trinity continues to move ahead, these “next steps” are top of mind, whether or not they are carried out by the initial volunteers who signed up or merged with existing congregational efforts. God has blessed Holy Trinity with gifted and passionate leaders, committed to helping this church live out its calling into the future.