



## **FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH AD-HOC TASK FORCE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### *First Lutheran Mission Statement:*

*We are BELIEVERS seeking to invite all into the  
CARING, SHARING AND GROWING ways of Christ!!*

*Philippians 4: 6-7 says, "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank Him for all that He has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus."*

### **THE WORK OF THE TASK FORCE**

#### **Background and appointment of the Task Force**

At the November 2009 Church Council Meeting, then-Congregation President Jeff Jorgenson called for the formation of an Education Ad Hoc Task Force to address issues raised in a petition presented to the council signed by over 100 members of the congregation. Task Force members were recruited and the first meeting was held in December 2009. The task force faced various obstacles and did not meet again. At the Annual Congregation Meeting in January 2010, congregation members encouraged the task force be revived with new members. Current-Congregation President Shelly Maes recruited members to the new task force, and the first meeting was held on March 1st. The task force was committed to focusing on the future and prayed God's help and healing on our church family.

The task force is comprised of Shirley Anderson-Porisch, Cathy Berg, Tom Hey, Bruce Lamprecht, Chris Ulrich, Congregation Vice President Jason Swenson, and Congregation President Shelly Maes.

The task force recognized the conflict that has arisen in our congregation as a result of the Church-Wide Assembly vote. This has been and is a difficult time for First Lutheran, as well as a great majority of ELCA congregations across the nation. In fact, each task force member has his/her own position on the Assembly action—and positions differ across the task force. The task force recognized, though, that each position is heart-felt and respect must be shown to each member regardless of their position. Most importantly, members of this task force all cared

deeply for each and every member of the family of First Lutheran, and this passion for the church family is what drove the task force to find ways to build a better and brighter ministry.

**What First Lutheran Is...(Taken from the website)**

First Lutheran is a WORSHIP place! Through regular gatherings for worship, we hear and sing and pray. A Praise Service is a part of our regular gatherings. Word and Sacrament are joyfully shared so that all might know God's gracious love in Jesus Christ.

First Lutheran is a MUSIC place! Children's Choirs, Senior Choir, Women's Choir, High School Choir, Bell Choir, Seasonal Brass and String Choirs, Praise Teams, Sunday School Convocations, and congregational singing! Organ and instruments, choir and congregation, all glorifying God through music!

First Lutheran is a place for YOUTH. Our full-time Youth Director coordinates youth ministry opportunities for:

Senior League (grades 9-12)  
Junior League (grades 7-8)  
Little League (grades 4-6)

Fun, Faith and Fellowship are shared through a variety of activities, including camping, youth gatherings, Bible Study, "Hang Time" in the Youth Room, and on and on!

A **Nursery** staffed by parents is provided.

A **Cry Room** is available.

Radio Broadcast each Sunday  
at 11 a.m. on KMHL-AM (1400)

Cable TV Broadcast Tuesday  
at 7:30 pm on Charter Channel 8 &  
on Knology Channel 67

Sunday School (September to May)

Preschool, Kindergarten, 1st Grade 8:50 and 11:05 a.m.

2nd Through 8th Grade 9:45 a.m.

Adult Bible Study - 9:45 a.m.

Adults are also learners at First Lutheran!

Numerous Bible Study opportunities are available throughout the week.

First Lutheran is a LEARNING place. Beginning with Rally Day each September and moving through weekly class sessions, the fellowship, fun, and learning never end. Throughout the school year Sunday school classes gather together to learn the good news about Jesus. Class sessions for youth age 3 through adults are held each Sunday morning. A vibrant and exciting Bible School and Good News Bearers, an after school program, use a variety of learning and teaching methods so that students can "experience" central bible stories.

First Lutheran is a place where MINISTRY and DAILY LIFE is integrated and celebrated. At First Lutheran we encourage and support one another to be faithful and committed followers of

Christ in our daily walks. Faith is often caught rather than taught. We seek to nurture and strengthen families with a faith filled value system that lasts a lifetime. First Lutheran is a place of proclaiming the gracious love of Jesus Christ in word and deed. We rejoice in caring for the needs of one another and reaching out to the needs of our community and world. YOU are invited to become an active member of First Lutheran Church. Church membership means the opportunity to both give and receive, in the name of Christ. How does one become a member?

By Baptism (infant or adult)  
Reaffirmation of Faith  
Transfer from another congregation

### **Educational Forums**

Since the Fall of 2009, there were several opportunities for adult congregation members to attend various educational forums. Two meetings/forums were held at First Lutheran, several were held at St. Stephen, and one was held in the community. Many members of First Lutheran attended one or more of these events.

### **Surveys**

Why so many surveys? We did have a survey completed by the stewardship committee in November 2009. The intent of that survey was to gather information to help the budgeting process...and possibly help the direction of the task force. The survey results showed there was division among the congregation on what to do regarding the ELCA vote—but did not give clear direction on what to do. Based on the options provided on the survey, about half of the respondents were supportive of the ELCA and the sexuality statement.....while the other half were not in support of the ELCA and its sexuality statement.

In March of 2010, the ad hoc task force gave the congregation another survey that provided more comprehensive results that will be used to help bind our congregation back together and re-build our ministry. Task Force members also called and visited with former and current members of First Lutheran to discuss not only the Church Wide vote, but other opportunities for improvement at First Lutheran Church. With God's help, First Lutheran will create a future of serving, praising and loving God and one another...with a ministry that will be welcoming for all!

### **Survey Results**

The Task Force received 114 surveys from members of First Lutheran Church. Here are the overall results of what First Lutheran should do based on the 2009 Church Wide Assembly vote. \*66 members wish to remain ELCA (26 of those noted that the resolution was key to their decision.)

\*31 members expressed the need to leave the ELCA or to have a congregation vote on whether to leave the ELCA or to stay.

\*17 members answered the questions to the survey, but didn't say one way or the other on what to do with the vote.

Note: As of March 2010, First Lutheran had 595 household units. Based on that number, the percentage of respondents was 20%. Another item to note is that not all household units are "active", so the percentage would be higher if we considered only those who are active.

(Inactive members are those who do not attend church or other activities, and are not giving

members.) However, the task force is comfortable with the response as research says if a survey has 30 responses it is representative of a population-regardless of the size of the population.

### **FINDINGS**

1. First Lutheran is a “Lutheran” congregation and should continue to be a “Lutheran” congregation.
2. First Lutheran needs to focus on its’ mission.
3. First Lutheran is an ELCA congregation belonging to the Southwestern Minnesota Synod.
4. It is concluded that there are disagreements regarding the sexuality statement approved at the 2009 Church Wide Assembly.
5. Because of dissatisfaction with the Church Wide Assembly vote, the Congregational Meeting held at First Lutheran in October 2009 resulted in the option for members to withhold their individual giving to the ELCA.
6. The resolution that was passed at the April 2010 Church Council meeting helped in the healing toward some members but also caused disagreement with others.
7. The congregation would like to see a variety of worship styles and formats (including contemporary and traditional).
8. Many members of First Lutheran sensed a lack of leadership and cohesiveness among the staff and pastors, and would like to see a change to more unity, communication and respect (25% of respondents).
9. There were many comments describing a need for First Lutheran to be more “Bible-based” (22% of respondents).

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The Task Force recommends the formation of a committee to work with the Worship and Music Committee to address contemporary and traditional formats, the re-building of Praise Teams, and help fill choir director positions.
2. The Task Force recommends the formation of a committee to explore options on how First Lutheran can become more “Bible-based”.
3. The Task Force recommends the Executive and Personnel Committee work together to address the staffing concerns raised by members of First Lutheran Church.
4. The Task Force recommends the alignment of all curriculum used for children age 3 through high school to ensure a common thread is apparent through all levels of education efforts done through both Youth and Family and Education.
5. The Task Force will continue to discuss the issue of affiliation based on the survey results, and will look to the Church Council for additional direction on this issue.

Note: We have many members who have expressed an interest in helping heal the family at First Lutheran. Providing short-term, focus-specific committee options to these members is one way to get more congregational involvement in our family’s future.

*Let us pray...*

Heavenly Father, You are intimately aware of the struggles we are experiencing -- the pain and the despair. You know the desire of our hearts to be healed of this. We ask now for Your healing touch on our family at First Lutheran. We know that You are able and that just like in Bible times, You can heal us and make us whole again.

We also understand that You will choose what is best for our congregation. We pray that through our trials, that we will draw close to You -- that You will be our comfort and strength. We pray that ultimately, whatever happens, You will be glorified through each and every one of us. And we ask you to be with our Church Council, the Ad-Hoc Committee, and our Pastors as they lead us through these trying and unknown times. May your Holy Spirit continue to work and flow in our Church and within ourselves. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.