

Visioning Session Report January 7th 2012

Held at Lynn and Jan Roger's home

Facilitated by Rev. Sarai Rice, Consultant from the Alban Institute

Visioning Team Members: Elaine Johnson, Lynn Young, Edie Lott, Bob Richards, Jan and Lynn Rogers, Lorelle Banzett, Pastor Ed Hilton, Julie Rogers, Karen Ellis

We first focused on the concerns and joys expressed in the stories generated from the members and attendees to TLPC. Sarai encouraged us to voice these. They were placed under one of these categories: Assets, Attributes, Story line (the words we use to describe our church), Context and Challenges.

These are the actual words of TLPC members and friends used in their stories, including those added by members during this session:

Assets

Community of people

Children's service

Liturgy

Hybrid liturgy – indigenous

Youth activities

Genuineness, authentic

People committed to outreach

Talented and committed people

Equipment

Our kids

Music

Church of the Mountain relationship

Flexible seating

Sermons

Location – central, visible, accessible

People from many different backgrounds

Instant communication – Google Apps

Money in the bank

Landlord relationship is positive

Large number of retirees

Acceptance

Our people are connected to other non-profits

History of adapting

Fellowship opportunities

Lots of parking

Attributes

Diverse

Generous – time, talents, treasure
Casual
We support each other
Strong lay leadership
Structure that could sustain more people
Make a difference in the community
Good at outreach
We have a brand not connected to a building
Members who come and go
Hospitable
Stability
Ecumenicity
Nomadic
Friendly
Enthusiastic
Connected – non-judgmental
Good tenants
Resilient
Family-oriented
God-centered values (mission)

Challenges

Not enough structure to support growth/integrating new or more people
Connections between kids and adults
Risk of losing our place to meet
Participation level of members (commitment)
Not replacing ourselves
Evangelism not great
Opportunities for adult learning and spiritual growth
Fear of growth and change
A tension between growth and maintenance
Risk of pastoral and volunteer burn-out
Stagnant size
We've reach our organizational capacity
Aesthetics
Stewardship education and growth opportunities for kids and adults
Getting kids involved in all aspects (outreach, etc.) – support them
Inflexible about worship time/day
“Cold” in church – lighting, climate, etc.
Lack of consistent place for activities
Expenses exceed revenue
Need a place to gather that is stable, regularly available
Need gender-specific learning and growth opportunities

Story-lines (what we say about ourselves)

We don't have a building = “homeless,” “Church without a home”

We live in a unique community that is seasonally transient
We make a difference in our community
People often say, "I love X (some program), but I wasn't able to attend"
We are an informal church

Community Context –

Lots of foreclosures, bankruptcy, divorce
Stark divide between second home/resort people and people who live here and work here year-round
9th-most expensive community to live in
Recreational community, active people
Many in community who are spiritual but not religious
School district has 40% language learners and 44% who qualify for free and reduced lunch

Context – What we see as the Purpose of "the Church"

Love your neighbor
Spread the words of Jesus – love, grace
Place to live out God's love, our core beliefs
Education
So Jesus could show us how to live
Health, fellowship, to be family
Reconciliation
Restoration
To be a "safe place"
Not just to separate into denominations

We did a couple of small group exercises where we and then Sarai randomly pulled thoughts from each category. Our task was to talk about them and develop vision and goals using just the ones pulled. It was difficult to focus on just the information that was pulled. We wanted to add more of the things we have at TLPC. It was a great exercise to get us to think about each item and to try to develop strategies or goals using just what we had in front of us.

The next small group process was to identify key thoughts. We categorized the ideas (on sticky notes) into groups. We were all free to move them around and talk about why each should go here or there. Then we named the groups. After further discussion we realized that increasing Organizational Capacity (human and financial resources) is necessary in order to accomplish the other goals. We also pulled a few things out of these categories and put them under the heading of Tools. We then ranked the goals in terms of importance, individual and congregational "energy" invested in them, and amount of change required.

This process led us to the following goals:

Goals

Goal #1 – Increase Organizational Capacity

Are we at TLPC at capacity for what we can accomplish?

Assess our infrastructure

Assess our structure to increase capacity.

Really look at our needs

Reassess our use of space for new opportunities, flexibility, and stability

Restructure to increase our capacity (human and financial resources)

Evaluate the need for denominational designations in our name

Free up people from some of the jobs they have that are not important.

Identify the important elements of our service, our programs, and outreach.

If we can't find someone to do a task, maybe it's not that important.

Determine what is important and use our people resources on those things.

Goal #2 – Expand Our Congregation's Connections the Community

What are the needs of the community?

Know more about community and needs

Connect gifts and skills of congregation to needs in community

Get our kids involved in all aspects of volunteering

No need to duplicate what the Social Outreach Team is doing, but increase support of the needs the team has identified

People get involved in areas where we don't have a presence.

Serve in other areas

Be able to connect to emerging community needs

Volunteer activities, Senior Center, kids helping kids etc.

Getting into the community and interacting with others.

Age or Interest Groups

Goal #3 – Expand Spiritual Learning and Growth opportunities

Give the youth opportunities to do set up, worship, preach & invite their friends

Adult Ed and Spiritual growth – explore people's need and implement accordingly

Assess and offer subject specific programs, age specific programs and offer to TLPC and the community along with follow up and support.

Appreciate with intention the contributions kids, the pastor, and adults make to the church and community.

Give adults and kids opportunities to learn and grow

- Youth group

- Hiking Group

- Young Family get together

- Women's Study group

- Men's Golf

- Women's Breakfast

- Subject studies

- Issue Studies or Groups

Sunday Service at the Lake/Camping possible

Evangelism (Many ideas surfaced, but this was not chosen as a priority goal. However, helping members learn how to share their God stories and invite people could be an integral part of Goal # 3.)

Assess how inviting as a congregation we are.

Assess how inviting we as individuals are.

Strategize our outreach

Hospitality specific to our community

Invite, welcome, share like our kids do (incl. across church communities)

Share our story

No need to try to convert

Is it only asking a neighbor or a friend to come to our Lutheran Presbyterian church?

Does our name really identify who we are and what we are about?

Could we attract people that are looking for a warm inviting place that want activities for their kids, or that want to hike with us, or meet us for book club?

Do we have to accomplish this by knocking on doors, marketing our denomination, or just inviting people to church service on Sunday morning?

Tools

Develop Pastor and volunteer appreciation program

Find ways to give staff and volunteers a break

Increase the use of technology for better communication

Adequate money and time for ministry.