



So, what happened at the planning weekend?

Quite a bit, actually. With lots more to come. Here's a summary of what God accomplished through our Envisioning Weekend:

Rev. Mike Ruhl, Director of the LC-MS Center for US Missions facilitated a weekend of strategic planning here at Living Word the weekend of August 26-28. Pastor Ruhl grew up in Canada as the son of a church planter (pastor who starts churches). As director of US Missions he has done visionary planning with LC-MS mission churches around the United States for the past six years. He spends his time training and assisting congregations and pastors in mission churches.

Nine members of our leadership team participated in the planning weekend: Chairman Jamie Iverson, Secretary Tammy Fuglie, Elders Jason Miller and Kevin Welsh, Community Outreach Director Laurel Iverson, Children's Church Coordinator Mona Hjelle, Christian Education Director Violet Dauk, Youth Director Bryson Wachter and Pastor David.

It was a very encouraging, energizing weekend as we heard Pastor Ruhl tell us that he sees God has greatly blessed us with Christ-centered, visionary leadership and great opportunity for mission and ministry in our community. He was impressed by our congregation's age-diversity and the emphasis we have on small-group Bible studies. He encouraged us to add even more small groups with studies that can be led by lay people. Pastor Ruhl said that we have an excellent foundation many mission churches lack. He told us that he normally spends quite a bit of the planning weekend helping congregations develop Core Values (beliefs and attitudes that "drive" us) and a Mission Statement (our basic purpose). He didn't feel the need to do that here as we already have the right Core Values (listed below) that need just some minor "tweaking" to update. In addition, he felt our Mission Statement (also below) was "right on target" with God's purpose.

The main focus of our weekend was on creating the basics of a vision - things we see God doing at Living Word three years from now. Here's a first-draft vision statement that includes many of those basics.

We see a new, multi-functional, family-friendly, kid-friendly building that is also available for use by other groups in the community when not used for our worship, studies and meetings. The building is situated on our land, which is home to a large playground and community garden and is also available for use by community groups. We are expanding our outreach ministry through more small group studies, our Make-a-Meal program, Sunday school, fellowship activities for young families, youth activities and by providing transportation to and from church for those who can't drive. We have a prayer group that meets regularly. We also see people of all ages growing closer to their Lord and to each other. Many of them are involved in worship using their talents in music and skits and visuals that enhance the message - a message that remains true to the Bible and focused on Jesus Christ as risen Lord and Savior. We are looking beyond ourselves and planning for a mission/ministry 'outpost' (possibly in Paynesville)

Being in a new building was foundational to that vision, and Pastor Ruhl encouraged us to "get right on" putting a building on the land we have. He said that in spite of the many bumps along the way we are ready for that next step. When the question came up about whether we were in a position to

afford to build, Pastor Ruhl told us that in looking at our finances we are ready and that he sees no reason why we can't do it. He told us to get a new building committee formed immediately. Based on his experience with mission congregations he recommended that the Mission and Ministry Team appoint a small, 4-5 person committee that will solicit input from the congregation but whose meetings would not normally be open to anyone but the committee members.

Our leadership team will be meeting to put those "basics" of our vision into a complete vision statement in the coming month. That vision statement will serve to give direction to our plans for mission and ministry. You can also look forward to goals for each of the Core Values we have listed below, and a sermon series highlighting each of them. We discovered that in order for our Core Values to be valuable, everyone needs to know what they are.

Living Word Lutheran Church Core Values:

- BIBLE-BASED AND CHRIST-CENTERED preaching, teaching and reaching
- MAKING COMMITTED DISCIPLES through small-group ministries
- BIBLE-STUDY, PRAYER, FELLOWSHIP & OUTREACH in our small groups
- CHRISTIAN EDUCATION where God's Children of All Ages grow in faith
- SERVANT-ORIENTED OUTREACH with the love of Jesus in practical ways
- POINTING PEOPLE TO JESUS, not To Ourselves
- CELEBRATING IN WORSHIP - Every Sunday truly a "Mini-Easter"
- PEOPLE PRAYING for each other, their community and world
- A YOUTH FOCUS that treats youth as part of the church today, not just the future of the church tomorrow
- A FUN PLACE to KNOW Jesus, GROW closer to Jesus and GO with Jesus
- PLANTING MORE CHURCHES as a way of expanding God's kingdom
- MAKING THE TRUTH OF GOD RELEVANT to lives Of people
- HUMILITY - Remembering we are imperfect people in need of the forgiveness of our perfect God.

Living Word Lutheran Church Mission:

We aim to bring God glory ...

Making disciples

as we go - wherever we go -

by being a joyful, caring, Christ-centered family of God

With God's help we seek to accomplish this mission by modeling the first Christian congregation in Acts 2:42-47: Being devoted to Prayer, Bible Study, Fellowship, Service, Worship and sharing the love of Jesus in practical ways through Small Group Ministry and Community Outreach.

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net