



What did you do at the Planning Retreat ?

On August 24-25 the members of the Mission and Ministry team met at Lutheran Island Camp (our district church camp) for a planning retreat. Getting away to do some planning was a "first" for us at Living Word. We headed to Lutheran Island Camp with the goal of narrowing our focus for the coming year. Instead of trying to focus on too many things, it's best to focus on just a few of the most important things. This is especially true for a congregation of our size.

Our focus needs to start with accomplishing our mission. Do you know the mission of Living Word? In a word (or two), our mission is to "Make Disciples." So, what is a disciple? Simply this: A Committed Follower of Christ. i.e. A Christian. So, to put it another way, our goal is to "Make Christians."

I posed a question to the worshipers the Sunday prior to our retreat. "What are the key ingredients in the making of Christians?" Here's what you said are the most important "ingredients." (#'s in parentheses indicate number of people who listed this "ingredient.")

- Love (12)
- Trust / Belief / Faith (11)
- Truth / Bible (10)
- Dedication/Commitment/Perseverance (8)
- People (4)
- Respect (4)
- Sharing (3)
- Holy Spirit (2)
- Forgiveness (2)
- Obedience (2)
- Patience
- Team Work
- Joy
- Understanding

We are one of God's ingredients

We looked at all these answers and decided that there's one of those "ingredients" that needs to take priority over the others. The Holy Spirit is one obvious priority. No one becomes a Christian without the Spirit. So we decided to focus on the main tool the Spirit uses: The Truth of the Bible. Without the Truth of the Bible, we won't know what it means to Love. Without the Truth of the Bible we won't know what to base our Faith on. Without the Truth of the Bible we won't be able to persevere through all the deceptions Satan throws at us to challenge our Commitment, etc... It all starts with the Spirit working through the Truth of God's Word.

As we discussed the need to be unified around this focus on God's Word, a couple ideas came out:

- 1) Take the congregation through a 40-Days of Purpose-like study that will get people connected through small group studies where each group is studying the same thing at the same time.
- 2) Help people to get into the Bible on their own every day with the Today's Light Bible. (The Today's Light Bible is broken down into 15-minute daily readings designed to take you through the whole Bible in two years.) The beauty of the Today's Light Bible is that before each reading there is a short paragraph alerting you to the themes of the reading. At the end of each reading is a summary paragraph that

highlights the important points God wanted us to take from the reading. Those introductory and summary paragraphs also explain puzzling things about ancient culture in everyday, layman's terms.) In short, it not only gets you into God's Word, but helps you understand it.

We are still in the planning stages of this program, so watch (and listen) for details as they unfold this month. We would like to kick off our Bible plan the first week of October.

We also came up with the following plans for "So That The World May Know" campaign

1. Create a visual of our land as it sits now compared with how it may look with a church on it.
2. Create a visual of the steps we need to climb (with corresponding dates) before we can think about breaking ground.
3. Create a visual that will keep us updated on the amount of funds pledged.
4. Enlist the congregation in helping put together a "Wish List" for each part of the new building.
e.g. On Sunday, Sept 9, everyone will have an opportunity to add their ideas to a "Sanctuary Wish List." The following Sunday everyone will do the same for a "Sunday School" wish list, then a "Youth area" wish list, etc... until we have a wish list for the entire building.
5. Find Prayer Leaders who can keep us focused on prayer needs for the campaign.
6. Create letters for members to mail to friends/relatives who fall under the category "Friends of the Congregation." In these letters we will ask them to keep our campaign in their prayers and giving them an opportunity to participate financially if God leads them to.

We also spent considerable time answering two questions about these individual aspects of our mission statement:

- Going (outreach)
- Making disciples
- Being Joyful
- Caring
- Being Christ-Centered
- Being a Family

1) What would God commend us for in each of these areas ?

2) What would God challenge us to correct or improve ?

I think it says a lot about the Spirit's work at Living Word that we came up with over an hour's worth of answers to the "commend" question and only about 15 minutes of answers to what God would have us correct.

I don't have space to list all the things God would commend us for, so here are some things we feel God would have us work to correct in each area:

Going....Train members how to get out of our comfort zone to reach out to non-members

Making disciples... Enlist more members in using their special gifts; hold Bible studies on dealing with people in a Christian way - especially difficult relationships

Being joyful... Quit worrying about and dwelling on what we don't have. Instead, thank God for what He has blessed us with.

Caring... Find a "Sonshine" person who can compile a list of birthdays, anniversaries, and send cards on those dates. Renew our meal program. Keep in touch with people who haven't been to church in awhile.

Christ-centered... Keep asking where *God* wants us to be going instead of just talking about where *we* think we should go.

Being a Family... We need to figure out a way to combine fellowship for the two worship services.

To sum it up, our planning retreat was not only a great time of working together, but we accomplished what we set out: Setting the direction for Living Word for the coming year. One of the participants said that we should make this a yearly event. I wholeheartedly agree. It's on the calendar for next August.

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net