

**Christ Lutheran Church 2014-2017 Strategic Plan**  
**Rough Draft Version 4 8/13/14**

Created by Strategic Planning Task Force (Spring/Summer of 2014)

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**Summary**

Christ Lutheran Church has much to be thankful for. In 2013, we celebrated 50 years of sharing Christ's love in our community and beyond. We presently have a stable congregation thanks to the population growth of Byron and our surrounding communities. We also have a core of very dedicated members that give generously of their time and talent for our mission together.

While we are steady at the present time, there are external factors that threaten our growth now and in the upcoming years. On a nationwide front, membership in the ELCA and in most mainline denominations is declining. The relevancy of the church is being called into question by younger generations. An increasing number of Americans claim no religious affiliation. Denominational loyalty, as well as the percentage of members attending church on any Sunday is declining. While Byron's population is projected to grow, many new citizens may not see choosing a faith community as a priority or a necessity. Growth of membership for Lutherans in America has traditionally come from immigration and procreation. Smaller families and changing immigration trends have negatively impacted growth.

The leadership of Christ Lutheran recognizes that it is important to address our opportunities and challenges in a deliberate strategic manner. **It is time to center on our identity as God's people and to deepen our participation in God's mission.** To that end, this document outlines Christ Lutheran's vision, mission, guiding principles, Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis, priorities and recommendations for the remainder of 2014 through 2017. This document is meant to be directional in nature, and flexible. It should be reviewed on an annual basis and revised as it is deemed necessary.

We start with Scripture as we consider our mission in Byron. Some verses that are foundational in thinking about our vision and mission include the following...

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. John 3:16

"Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" Jesus said to him, "'you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" Matthew 22:36-39

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I

have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”  
Matthew 28:18-20

God’s mission is to reach out in love to a broken but blessed world through Jesus Christ. It is his desire that our lives be abundant, undying, and eternal in Jesus Christ. Christ Lutheran seeks to share His love with all people.

### **Vision – *Making Christ’s love known***

Jesus authorized and commissioned his followers to “make disciples” and to teach them all that He had commanded. The greatest commandment was to love God and people.

### **Mission – *Equipping all ages to lovingly serve God and people.***

At Christ Lutheran ELCA Church, we participate in making disciples by equipping all ages to love and serve God through outreach, worship, fellowship, education, and service thus making Christ’s love known.

- Through **Outreach**, we share God’s word with others.
- Through **Worship**, followers gather to be aware of God’s presence, listen to His word, and receive grace through the sacraments. In worship we show our love and adoration of God through prayer, praise and thanksgiving for all that He has done.
- Through **Fellowship**, followers encourage, equip and support each other thus developing resiliency in dealing with life’s challenges.
- Through **Education**, followers acquire knowledge of God to strengthen their understanding of God’s promises and God’s mission.
- Through **Service**, followers experience God’s love and care through serving others.

### **Guiding Principles**

With Christ at the center of everything we do, following are our guiding principles:

- We love the Lord our God with all our heart and seek his direction in everything we do.
- We love our neighbor as ourselves and provide service to meet their needs.
- We welcome all people wherever they are in their faith journey.
- We equip each other to live as followers of Christ.
  
- As a result of these priorities, Christ Lutheran will be a center for
  - Growing in our relationship with God and others
  - Finding and using our spiritual gifts for God’s purposes
  - Equipping disciples who love and serve God and people
  - Hope and healing for those who are seeking

### **SWOT Analysis**

#### **Strengths**

- Education for 3 year olds – 8<sup>th</sup> grade is strong
- We have strong participation of our youth as leaders in River of Life.
- Pastor Steve is good at connecting with people

- We are known for being a strong traditional Lutheran congregation
- Our commitment to local and global hunger/homelessness
- Quality and variety of music
- Sharing our building with other community non-profits such as AA, temporary housing for families, Boy scouts, Girl Scouts, Women of Today, and Neighbors helping neighbors.
- Currently we give 10% of our offerings beyond the ministry of our congregation
- Physical location – we are very visible to the community.

#### Weaknesses

- Education for 9<sup>th</sup> graders – adults is minimal at best
- Education programs do not sufficiently involve or engage the parents
- Governing structure does not encourage wide spread engagement and innovative thought.
- Not much focus outside our four walls, not focused on the community

#### Opportunities

- Local population is growing
- Identifying spiritual gifts of the congregation (start with staff and council, committee leadership)
- Engaging parents of children in River of Life and Confirmation.
- Engaging adults and youth beyond Confirmation.
- Using technology to reach people in new ways
- Understanding how to meet people where they are
- Create intergenerational learning
- Equipping families who want to lead their children in their relationship with God but don't know how.

#### Threats

- Growing mistrust of all religion
- A growing population that sees the church as irrelevant
- Multiple distractions/choices for families
- Extracurricular activities for youth conflicts with church engagement

#### **Priorities**

- The congregation understands what God wants from His people, and is passionate about our role as followers of Christ – faithfulness and fruitfulness.
- The congregation feels there are ample opportunities for maturing in their Christian faith and meaningful service.
- The congregation is engaged and feels they are part of a church that is faithfully participating in God's mission.
- Organizational structure is flexible and responsive to meet opportunities and challenges.
- Church supports three community needs in a significant way – hunger, homelessness, and the elderly.
- Average worship attendance will grow by 10%.

- Membership growth at Christ Lutheran is equivalent to the growth rate of the Byron community.

## **Recommendations**

### **Year 1**

1. Add a second worship service that includes contemporary music and a less formal atmosphere
  - The audience we want to reach with the service has the following characteristics
    - Feels that the current service is too formal
    - Does not have an affinity to traditional/classical music
    - Is hospitable to people from non-Lutheran or non-liturgical background
    - May be a member of Christ Lutheran that currently does not attend worship very frequently
    - May be a prospective member from non-Lutheran background that does not have a church home
    - Wants to worship at a later service
  - Purpose: To increase overall worship engagement of those who are not inspired by a traditional service or prefer a later service.
  - Pastor Steve will form a task force made up of 1-2 members of Worship and Music Committee, plus 1-2 CLC members interested in this type of service, to consult and assist Pastor Steve on developing and implementing this service.
  - Timing: Service will be in place in the Fall 2015.
  
2. Discontinue Adult Sunday School and add interaction time for adults and parents during Sunday School hour
  - While the Adult Sunday School program has a loyal group of attendees, it is not reaching a broad audience of parents with children in Sunday School. An alternative type of engagement would create the opportunity for reaching a broader audience.
  - The audience we want to reach has the following characteristics
    - Most likely has children in the Sunday School program
    - Is looking for an avenue to discuss challenges with raising a family and the chaos of life that goes with it.
  - Purpose: To engage parents with young children in more active participation in the church (mission of God)
  - Council will form a Task Force to poll members, research successful programs, and seek out the advice of the Synod Youth and Family Director in the development of the initiative. This Task Force will be responsible for development and integration. Ideas for consideration are a calendar of events/activities.
  - Success will be measured by the number of attendees at weekly sessions. The goal will be to have an average of 20 attendees at each session in the first year, 30 regular attendees in the second year.
  - Timing: Programming will start at the latest in Fall of 2015.
  
3. Integrate family learning into the Sunday School and Confirmation programs

- Council will form a Task Force made up of Congregation members interested in creating more faith-based experiences for families with children in River of Life and Confirmation.
  - The Task Force will meet with Synod Youth and Family Director for insight on ways to create experiential learning. The Task Force will benchmark other churches and poll congregation members for additional insight. This Task Force will be responsible for development and integration of outcomes. Outcomes could include, but not be limited to social activities, community service projects, etc.
  - Outcomes could begin in the 2014-2015 year, with a comprehensive plan for application in 2015-2016 year.
4. Add signage to the outside grounds that communicates who we are and what we are doing at Christ Lutheran
- A work group will be formed to evaluate signage opportunities and make recommendations to the Council for implementation.
  - Executive Committee to explore future communications needs and how to address.
5. Evaluate the value of developing a church-wide program to focus on talent discovery and strengths development
- The team will answer the questions –
- How will we determine a member's gifts?
  - How will we communicate that to the member?
  - How will we collectively understand what strengths exist?
  - How will those strengths be matched up to opportunities to serve?
- In the Fall of 2014 the Council will participate in a Strengths Finder Retreat lead by Karen Gieske, Assistant to the Bishop and Youth and Family Director for the ELCA Southeastern MN Synod. The purpose of the retreat is to identify the strengths of the Council and have discussion about the benefits of creating a strengths-based congregation. If developing a strengths-based congregation is agreed upon, the Executive Committee will lead the Council in the development of a plan for implementation.
6. Expand the role that Evangelism plays at Christ Lutheran
- Timing: Following the Strengths Finder Retreat the Executive Committee will consider the development of the following teams. Work needs to be done to put definition around the team structure, define responsibilities and recruit volunteers. A timeline for implementation needs to be developed. Focus will be placed on this in 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2015.
  - **New Member Care Team**- the purpose of this group is to ensure that new members and absentee members do not slip through the cracks. This group is responsible for getting members involved and connected in the church. They also understand the needs of the members and the community, including how best to reach them, and can keep the Council informed for any action that needs to be taken.
  - **Ministry Team** –the role of this group is to coordinate groups of people for service tasks or other needs within the congregation. This group will work closely with the Council, in

helping people find places to get engaged. Small groups could include Bible studies, service, social gatherings, special interest groups, singles groups, etc.

- **Congregational Care Team.** This group would focus on pastoral care by encouraging and being a resource for those at Christ Lutheran going through a crisis, health, or relationship/grieving. This group could evaluate Stephen ministries to see if they would be a fit for our congregation.
- **IHN Team (Revised)** – IHN is a key service effort for our congregation but it lacks visibility within the congregation. We also need to understand what additional needs there are that could be filled by the congregation.

## Year 2

Year 2 is about evaluating changes that were made in Year 1 and making modifications or course corrections. It is also about adding to the successful efforts already in place.

1. Continue to develop and refine 2<sup>nd</sup> worship service
  - Goal is to increase average worship attendance by 10% per year.
2. Develop Evangelism Teams around the following service areas:
  - Hunger Team – the purpose of this team is to work with local and international efforts to stop hunger. On the international front efforts may involve fundraising within the congregation. Locally efforts could involve fundraising, working at local food pantries, working with local schools, etc.
  - Elderly Service Team – the purpose of this team is to support Byron Helping Neighbors to support the needs of our local elderly citizens. It could be providing volunteers, or helping to support fundraising efforts. Exploration of the needs of BHN would be one of the first steps of this team.
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3. Integrate strengths-based language into all volunteer opportunities
  - The majority of the congregation and all new members joining Christ Lutheran will have their strengths inventory and be able to identify areas of service that they wish to apply their strengths.
  - The Member Strengths Team will be formed and work with other Teams and Committees to incorporate strengths-based language when identifying needs.
4. Conduct annual review Christ Lutheran's Constitution and Bylaws
  - As outlined in the Bylaws, the Nominating Committee will review the Constitution and Bylaws and propose any document revisions to the Council reflective of changes made to the operating structure from year 1 of this document. The Committee will seek the guidance of the Synod in assisting in the development of a governing document that will be approved by the Congregation and the Synod.

## Year 3

Year 3 although assessment of new programs continues, this year assumes that the efforts of the past two years have been successful in engaging the congregation more in passionately living out God's mission in our community and beyond.

While the focus for years 1 and 2 have been mainly to engage the congregation in Christ Lutheran, wherever they are at, year 3 will provide the opportunity to begin moving people forward in their faith journey – from Community to Crowd, Crowd to Congregation, Congregation to Committed, Committed to Core and Core back to Community (from Rick Warren’s book Purpose Driven Church)

Efforts will be placed in the following areas:

- Enhancing our outreach efforts in the community.
- Adding to our membership roster.
- Providing deeper experiential opportunities for the congregation.