

Bethlehem Lutheran Church
Spokane, WA
Transformation Team
Initial Plan of Action
Draft March 2007

Designed through careful study, prayer and conversation at the Transformation Conference, this initial plan will be informed, guided, altered and used in community with the members of Bethlehem Lutheran Church.

1. The change process: How will you start a conversation about change when you go back home?

We have started a one way conversation about change to prime the pump already using the “transformation” word often in sermons, writing about transformation in our newsletter, praying as a congregation for the transformation team. We began an initial conversation last Sunday in Adult education by discussing the book The Great Commission.

We have indicated in Adult ed that we would spend the next three Sundays on the topic of transformation.

Informing the members when we return that this is not about changing dramatically right now, this week, this month, etc. It is about small changes, consistently, over time. As a visible, somewhat non-threatening representation of transformation, we will enhance our front entrance by perhaps adding above ground flowerpots outside the front door and new front doors that appear to be entrance doors and inviting.

We are feeling like one of our new ministries might be a nursing ministry so one member of our team will be working in coming months to pull together a comprehensive plan to start this and holding it for the right time, which we discern might indeed be when we map our assets as a congregation.

2. God’s mission and purpose for the church. How will you foster a discussion and reach consensus when you go back home?

Not sure if we can discern this genuinely and accurately until we feel the members of our church come to church for “others” rather than for “selves” ... when they feel the church is God’s and not ours. So to begin, we need to work on many things:

- a continuing expectation of miracles, a listing of miracles as seen by individuals*
- moving people’s faith to the position of “expectation of miracles” around transformation*
- beginning to discuss real, personal issues about God using faith stories, and stories about God’s presence in our lives and prayer life sharing*
- when we begin to feel people are moved to remember and then tell others their own journey with God, they will understand how much of that*

journey took and takes place outside of church. This might serve to put church in a new perspective in relation to what God's will for "us" is as individuals.

- *Additionally, getting to know each other in this deeper spiritual way, first, before discussing the purpose of our church and later our opinions on divisive issues, **will** serve to inform our assumptions about people in those times as we struggle in conversation around difficult and uncomfortable issues*

3. Telling our faith stories. How will you help people share their faith stories when you go back home?

- *first in smaller groupings of church members such as adult education*
- *Perhaps it makes sense also to conduct this work in other venues such as with confirmation class, even later bringing in men in the church (since this is currently a group of boys) to share their own journeys and prayer life.*
- *Perhaps also the choir and council, the council through retreat work*

4. How will we help our congregation to come to agreement on its purpose and guiding principles?

The How: we will involve the entire church in the early stages using the following format and careful order:

Starting in adult education:

- a. *brainstorm and list our fears*
- b. *brainstorm and list our dreams*

Moving out to the larger congregation

- a. *Have adult ed create the survey for these things for the church members not in adult ed*
- b. *Adult ed then records and processes the questions and adds them to the list*
- c. *Invites more participation in coming weeks in adult education*

Moving back to adult education

- c. *model and then facilitate sharing faith stories*
- d. *model and then facilitate sharing when God has spoken to you, walked beside you or otherwise let it be manifestly known he is present with you*
- e. *Study the book of Acts together*
 - a. *See if it informs our dreams/fears lists*
 - b. *Discuss the role of the "church" in Acts*
 - c. *I'm on a mission to , Love God*
 - d. *My mission for Bethlehem is , Love God*
 - e. *Discuss miracles from Acts*
 - i. *List some BLC miracles for all to see*
- f. *facilitate the hard work of devising our church's purpose and guiding principles as changed and "called" people of God*

When/What: Our church council is the bedrock of the “maintenance” and “business” function of our church. We need to move them out of that for a time and into a missionary and leader function. We will begin with the Council during the next 4-6 months worth of meetings by working with the president to designate a specific time in our council meetings for study, prayer, and to guide the group through the efforts being accomplished in Adult Ed.. We will pray for that group regularly so that business can be taken care of while the Council is treated to the model above and so that the rest of council will be comfortable changing functions for a time, spending more time in study and prayer and sharing, and less in business.

We will simultaneously start the above model with Adult Education. For those who don't come to either of those venues, we will be passing out surveys asking fears and dreams.

Fears and dreams will be listed and posted on newsprint for all to see in the fellowship hall and will not be closed or static lists. The items can also be from anonymous sources. Things can be changed, taken off, put on either list as we work this coming few months. And we can pray for these dreams and fears in the various venues we are conducting this work. Just the act of airing these things, beside each other (fears and dreams) and keeping them posted for a while, fosters both risk and hopes and reminds, visibly, the members we are undergoing some transformation...a climate of mild tension and expectation. Listing miracles in this fashion and location and allowing members to add and list ones they see at their leisure can help us see God in action in our church.

It is important to note that some people span multiple venues of groupings and gatherings and they will get double shots of this work. Some of these individuals, however, may have a naturally harder time accepting change(s) and this might serve to help them see this work in process in multiple venues. This is where “miracles” may actually be more visibly produced as individuals feel empowered and called by God in ways they would not have predicted or foreseen for themselves.

5. How will we help our congregation see and inventory its assets?

This may actually be the third thing we accomplish, after first managing our fears, conflict, grief and suffering by naming them, praying over them, and keeping them in front of us as we work in community with each other, then moving on to rediscovering God in our lives, when he's been doing that work and discovering what he is calling us as individuals to do in our lives. Miracles will happen here also, probably prominently in some instances.

This is probably a stage a couple months down the road. But we could foresee using the sticky note method at the right time to inventory our assets.

6. How will we manage change issues such as grief, conflict and suffering?

We have a Pastor who is comfortable with conflict and actually has a passion for ministering to the lower levels of it. This will pay huge dividends on our journey. We

have discerned a calling to include all members of our congregation in the ministry of personal transformation through study, prayer, and sharing in coming weeks. The Transformation Team will be praying for those people who seem uncomfortable with this as we encounter these activities and we will make efforts to reach out personally to those individuals when called for.

The Pastor has discerned a calling to do more home visits during this change process as part of that portion of his duties indicated under the “missionary model” of the transformed church.

7. How will you communicate with the congregation and other leaders, not just when you go home but on a regular basis:

For the foreseeable future the council will be undergoing transformation just as our adult ed members will, as people. The monthly newsletter has an already established series titled “Transformation Talk” where we can continue to send out a written message each month, meant to stimulate conversation and reflection around one aspect of change each month.

8. How will we sustain momentum and connections through the use of some accountability partner or coaching?

We have an I.O.U. from a very good minister which we will “cash in” in about 6 months to give our church a physical exam and preach the truth as he sees it from the pulpit one Sunday.

Daily prayer for T. Team members for energy to carry on.

Monthly meetings for T. Team.

Regular meetings with the two other area churches and their Transformation Teams to share spiritual and emotional support

9. Who else should be involved right away and how will you get them involved?

Church president

Youth education director

Council

Adult education participants

We have also discerned a couple women who might be willing to add their gifts to our transformation team

10. Lastly, what is one thing that you can DO when you go back because you already have enough permission to do this? One visible, concrete action by your team.

There will be multiple such things, including hanging lists of dreams and fears generated out of our first Sunday adult education after we return. We also decided to hire an attendant for our nursery so that we can be honest when we suggest on our bulletins that we have an attended nursery. We also will invest in flower pots for our front entrance and begin searching for and purchasing equipment and hardware for a grander front entrance.