

Ministry Review Report

October 2-4, 2015

**ST MATTHEW'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
TAYLORSVILLE, UTAH**



Rocky Mountain Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Ministry Review Process

From October 2-4, 2015 St Matthew's Lutheran Church in Taylorsville, Utah, participated in a Ministry Review with a team from the Rocky Mountain Synod.

Ministry Review Team Members

- Rev. Jessica Hatch, Retired Episcopal Priest
- Rev. Gene Zeller, Ascension Lutheran Church, Ogden, UT
- Dave Warren, Mt Tabor Lutheran Church, Salt Lake City
- Kirk Simon, Elim Lutheran Church, Ogden, UT
- Rich Nelson, Community of Joy Lutheran Church, Rio Rancho, NM (Facilitator)

The team met with the following groups separately:

- Pastor Christine Higuera-Street
- Community Leaders (including Cindy Seeland from Al-Anon, and Ken Deller, Andy Ballamis, and Tina Ballamis from Boy Scouts)
- Congregational team including:
 - Mike Stoker
 - Ronda Schuster
 - Mary Beck
 - Karla Stoker
 - Brian Schuster
 - Mary Kay Arnold
 - Eric Stoker
- Members of the ministry review team attended worship
- Review team members hosted an open forum of congregation members before worship

During these meetings the review team listened to each group describe the ministry of St Matthew's Lutheran Church in terms of its past, present and future. Based on those conversations the review team compiled a list of initial affirmations and recommendations which were shared with the congregational team on Sunday.

This report includes the final affirmations and recommendations as well as resources the congregation may find helpful.

Thank you for your openness and willingness to participate in the ministry review process. We hope that it has been a blessing to you and your congregation. May God continue to bless your ministry as you move forward.

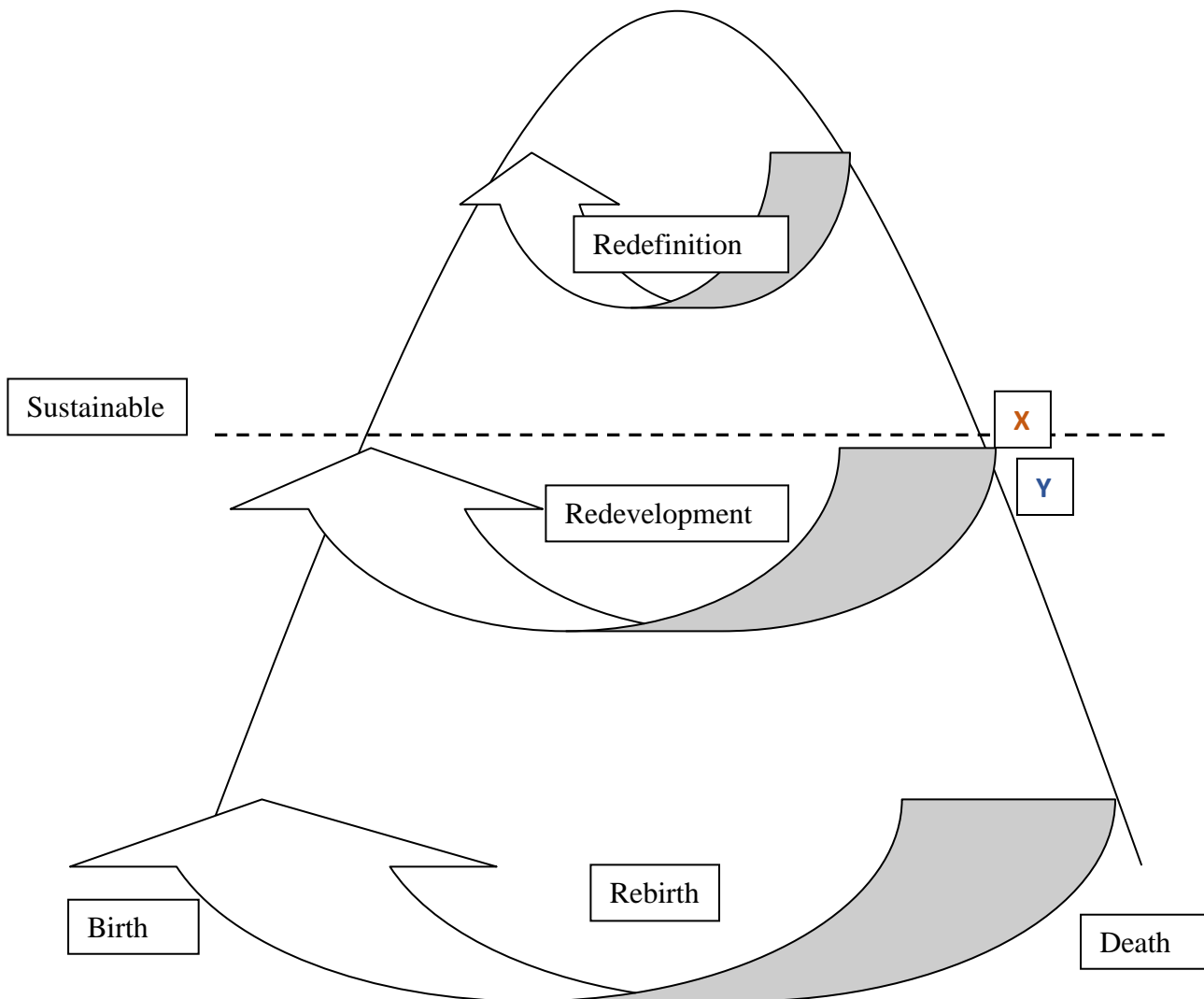
Life Cycle

Below is the life cycle of all congregations. Congregations are born, they grow, they plateau and eventually they lose their ability to sustain themselves and die. However, congregations can renew themselves if they take appropriate action at the right time.

The following chart shows the life cycle and potential for different kinds of renewal. Both the congregational team and the ministry review team marked where they believe the congregation is at this point in time. See their marks below.

Congregational Team: **X**

Ministry Review Team: **Y**



Congregation Mission Evaluation

Both the congregation team and the ministry review team rated the congregation on the following scale.

a. Healthy and moving forward

The congregation has a clear sense of purpose and a commitment to mission. Overall health looks strong. The ministry is growing at a strong pace and is using models for ministry appropriate to continued effective outreach.

b. Healthy but maintaining

The congregation appears basically healthy with no major health struggles, has some missional clarity but produces minimal results, is growing slowly or is now plateaued.

c. Health concerns

The congregation exhibits some signs of health. Here there may be factors needing serious attention. Attendance is not increasing and resources are stretched. Without intentional change, the congregation is likely to struggle at its current level or shrink. Future use of resources should be evaluated carefully.

d. Health in jeopardy

The congregation is clearly too small to maintain critical mass for mission or is in noticeable decline. The health of the ministry is also in question. A new strategy for ministry in the field is mandatory.

Congregational Team Rating: C-

Ministry Review Team Rating: D+

SWOT Analysis

The congregational team performed a SWOT analysis. Below is a summary of their work:

Strengths

- Fellowship – welcoming
- Prayer
- Support
- Location/Building
- Worship – Sunday services
- Young people – resurgence
- Volunteers

Weaknesses

- Bible Study – lack of participation
- Conflict resolution
- Communication
- Lack of Structure
- Operating under fear

Opportunities

- Jack's & Non's
- Location/Building
- Synodical Walk
- Redevelopment

Threats

- LDS culture
- Silo mentality
- Decline of organized religion
- Economy

Affirmations

1. The leaders of St Matthew's Lutheran Church are fully invested in and committed to each other and their church community. They are tenacious and determined that ministry continue in their church.
2. They have demonstrated resilience and a wide variety of skills and talents in relying on themselves for the past 18 months to maintain the ministry and ensure pulpit supply for the congregation. Continuing to use their gifts will allow them to search for a shepherd and not a CEO when they transition to seeking a called pastor.
3. The leadership has embraced Pastor Christine as their new shepherd and appears to be open to possible futures in spite of the fears they expressed. They want to follow her leadership as they enter the redevelopment process; they anticipate learning, growing and becoming equipped for new ministry possibilities.
4. St Matthew's leaders have a realistic view of their current situation. They have accomplished much in maintaining the building and worship ministry of the church, and they recognize they currently do not have all of the experiences and understandings necessary to redevelop and revitalize their Mission and ministry.
5. The congregation is open and welcoming to visitors. They extend love and support to each other and to others, such as their welcome to Pastor John.
6. Worship at St Matthew's is a rich experience rooted in God's Word. The worship team uses several resources for worship to provide a meaningful liturgy and service of Word and Sacrament.
7. St Matthew's makes their facility available to community groups such as Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts and Al-Anon. The building appears to be well maintained.
8. Pastor Christine brings her considerable life experience to her ministry. She is gifted to equip and empower congregation members to identify and use the gifts God has given them in the service God has in mind for them. Christine has a very strong desire to build positive relationships with St Matthew's members (such as the confirmation students) as well as others in the larger community.

Recommendations

1. St Matthew's has gone through an extended period of darkness. The congregation and its leaders need to come together and identify the Mission that God has for the church – Christ gave us the Great Commandment and the Great Commission, but St Matthew's needs to discern what “loving one another” and “making disciples” looks like at this time and in this place. Knowing and living their Mission will allow them to make the decisions needed to proclaim the Gospel and grow God's Kingdom in Taylorsville.
2. The church needs to develop and implement a comprehensive, year-round Stewardship initiative, grounded in the Mission, to help the congregation understand the full extent of the gifts and talents in their midst and the true cost of their Mission.
3. The leadership works to provide transparency regarding finances, but we recommend a full financial audit at each major change of leadership – including the installation of a new pastor – to ensure accountability. St Matthew's should also review their current financial procedures and communications and give the congregation clear, complete and consistent financial and budget reports.
4. St Matthew's needs to review its current governance structure with the goal of identifying and clarifying roles and responsibilities between and among the pastor, the council, program leaders and the congregation, and improving decision-making and communication.
5. The council and pastor should develop an ongoing volunteer and leadership development plan to identify, prepare and mentor, and appreciate volunteers and leaders.
6. The church should consider a leadership retreat to build relationships rooted in the Gospel and focused on the Mission.
7. The church should continue the healing process and seek ways to extend forgiveness and resolve conflicts more effectively.
8. St Matthew's should consider giving the welcome and hospitality ministry the shape and resources to ensure a consistent, Gospel-based welcome and follow-through that leads to membership, involvement and growth.
9. St Matthew's should consider conducting a facilities audit to determine current and future facilities needs, projected costs and a schedule to ensure the building is up to date and in compliance with local and state requirements, to allow volunteers to balance their time and energy with the Mission, (such an audit may be available from the Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA).

10. We recommend St Matthew's make a special effort to discern and put in place a pro-active plan for faith formation, especially in young people – grounded in the Gospel with multiple opportunities to know, share and grow in God's love.

Note from the Director of Evangelical Mission (DEM): In addition to the recommendations, as part of the redevelopment ministry, the redeveloper pastor needs to form a redevelopment team and work with the leaders to create a Mission Action Plan, which may include many of the above recommendations. Please be in conversation with the new DEM about the development of a team and plan.

Resources

In this section we will describe potential resources and more detailed ideas about how St Matthew's could move forward with the recommendations.

The ELCA resource catalogue (<http://resources.elca.org/>) has some helpful things. Use the menu on the left to find resources on everything from evangelism. Some things are free as downloads. Others must be purchased.

Identity – who are we and what is our niche?

- Process for discerning purpose statement
- Baptized, We Live: Lutheranism As a Way of Life, by Daniel Erlander

Mission Planning

- This site has several do-it-yourself tools for mission planning. Some of these have been developed within synods or congregations and are being shared on this site. It includes: This hands-on guide to mission planning workbook developed by the SW California synod for their congregations. It is quite comprehensive because it includes everything from creating a vision, to listening to people in your community to identify the needs and your potential niche, identifying assets and opportunities, clarifying goals, aligning resources, implementing the plan, and gauging progress. It also includes worksheets for developing SMART Goals, creating measurable outcomes and assigning/following up on specific priorities assigned to the council, pastor/staff, and developing a budget to support these efforts and a sample project management timeline.

Evangelism – strategies to tell others about who we are.

There are two aspects of evangelism: teaching people to share their faith and telling the community about your congregation.

Sharing our faith:

One of our responsibilities as Christians is to talk about our faith. Members of Lutheran congregations frequently talk about their faith with friends and family when the topic comes up. However, many Lutherans express a desire to be more comfortable talking about their own faith. Many resources are available to congregations who wish to teach their members how to more comfortably share their faith with each other and the world. These practices not only help share the good news, but they also teach members how to listen in ways that deepen relationships with others and deepen the faith of both parties.

- Unbinding the Gospel: Real Life Evangelism from GraceNet is a new faith-sharing program that includes video, testimonials, downloads and best practices. It is funded by the Lily Foundation study how we can breathe new life into stuck churches. Their most recent evaluation sheds light on the key practices, talks about combating natural resistance, describes how keys to combat “snap-back” (a loss of forward momentum), and the critical

role that pastoral leadership plays in everything. These principles hold true even if the congregation doesn't engage the Gifted to Grow process itself.

- Teaching people to talk about their faith and how to listen to others: Front Porchin'
- The Evangelizing Church: A Lutheran Contribution (Richard Bliese and Craig Van Gelder, eds.). Look at Lutheran spin – grace and relationship to Lutheran witness.
- The ELCA at this site has information on how to teach people to talk about their faith and the congregation one on one.

Telling the community about our church:

- Building Awareness of our Church: This resource shows how to use the ELCA brand and graphics in your local congregation. It also talks about some key aspects of what is unique about the ELCA. These can be used in member trainings.
- ELCA link to a brief summary of 6 books that talk about marketing in congregations.
- The ELCA produced guidelines for Social Media in Congregations.

Stewardship – how to do a yearlong multi-faceted stewardship campaign

- This ELCA article about stewardship offers more information about what Stewardship is. Stewards of God's Love is a resource guide to congregations developing comprehensive stewardship programs. StewardNet allows congregations to receive regular e-mail updates from the ELCA about new stewardship resources, ideas and best practices.
- Online giving – direct deposit (Examples: Vanco Services, EasyTithe (includes mobile app) (These are examples found on the internet. They are not endorsed by the ELCA or Rocky Mountain Synod. Search your browser for more examples.) Here is a review of some donation tools for non-profits.
- The Power of Asset Mapping: how your congregation can act on its gifts, by Luther Snow.

Empowering Lay Leadership – finding and mobilizing lay leaders in the congregation

There are three parts necessary to empower lay leadership: An understanding of what gifts you have within the congregation and where the energy is, an understanding of the current and future needs of your congregation and a willingness to share responsibility. Below are some resources to help you identify gifts within your congregation as well as passion. There are also resources that show different ways congregations use lay leaders.

- The Power of Asset Mapping: how your congregation can act on its gifts, by Luther Snow.
- Pastor and People: Making Mutual Ministry Work (Richard Brueshoff, Augsburg Fortress, 2003)
- Behavioral Covenants in Congregations (Gilbert R. Rendle, Alban, 1999).
- Abiding Hope is a large ELCA congregation in Littleton CO. They describe a wide variety of opportunities for lay people to serve within the congregation. The Ministry Catalogue

(PDF) outlines core areas of ministry for all congregations. The descriptions of each area show the purpose of the ministry and highlight key traits of a person who would be good at the ministry. While smaller congregations may not have all these ministries, this document provides a good baseline of potential ways to connect lay leaders with ministries.

Preparing people for change

- Letting Go: transforming congregations for ministry (Roy D. Phillips, Alban, 1999)
- Reframing Hope: vital ministry in a new generation (Carol Howard Merritt, Alban, 2010)

Administrative structures: Personnel management, financial management, etc.

- The ELCA Administrative Matters is a by-monthly newsletter about a wide variety of administrative topics including establishing a secure process for collecting offerings and other administrative practices.

Finances: The ELCA has resources for congregations around financial management: <http://www.elca.org/en/Resources/Financial>. This will be a resource for the congregation's secretary/finance manager.

They include the following:

- Congregational audits
- Create financial contingency plans
- Internal control best practices

Record Keeping: This will be a resource for your congregation's secretary and administrative assistant. <http://www.elca.org/Resources/Office-of-the-Secretary>

- Official Minutes Guidelines: how to keep adequate meeting minutes
- Congregation Records Retention Schedule: how long do we have to keep which kinds of records?
- Guide to using the Model constitution, Model Constitution

Personnel Management

- See the Rocky Mountain Synod's personnel policies as a guideline for things to consider.

Risk Management

- Risk Management – what does it include?
- Church Property Loss – what to do if you have a loss

- Safety and Loss Prevention
- Disaster Planning
- Purchasing Insurance Guidelines: While your congregation may already have insurance it may be helpful to review the policy compared to these guidelines. See the main page for ELCA endorsed property liability insurance programs.

Healing

- The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb (Eric Law, Chalice Press, 1993)
- Healing Liturgies for the seasons of life (Abigail Evans, Westminster John Knox Press, 2004) This book includes a liturgy for communal reconciliation from the Roman Catholic church that could be modified for a Lutheran setting. This book also includes a ritual for intergenerational healing that marks the conclusion of a healing process and prepares people to move on.

Worship

- Re-Pitching the Tent (Richard Giles, Canterbury Press Norwich, 2004 third edition)
- Christopherson, D. Foy. *A Place of Encounter*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004. A Lutheran Understanding of Worship Space
- Vosko, Richard S. *God's House is Our House: Re-imagining the Environment for Worship*. Collegeville: Order of St. Benedict, 2006.
- An Episcopalian perspective, but like Vosko, lots of imagination and photos of re-imagining space. Solid Theology.
- Bill, Brent, Nancy DeMott, and Tim Shapiro. *Holy Places: Matching Sacred Space with Mission and Message*. Alban Institute: Herndon, Virginia, 2007.

This is more the how to ... why are you doing it and helping you do it ... very nuts and bolts but walks through a typical healthy process.

- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, *Renewing Worship: Principles for Worship*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2002.
- Huffman, Walter C. and S. Anita Stauffer. *Where We Worship*. Philadelphia: Board of Publication, Lutheran Church in America, 1987.