

Atonement Lutheran Church
Growth Gathering Event – March 6, 2005
Transcription of Event Newsprint Notes
(based on input from 59 participants)
Event facilitated by Shirley A. Teig

This Afternoon's Objectives:

To seek your input!
Work hard
Work in small groups
(You provide the wisdom)
“Think outside the box”
Have fun!

Acts 17:16-23 God Gets Into our Conversation:

What is this text saying to Atonement Lutheran?

- We can appear religious, but aren't
- What are we worshipping?
- A split between traditional and contemporary service
- We need to get to know Jesus
- We need to be open to new ideas
- Through telling and hearing the message, it became known
- ...tell anyone who will listen!
- Today's idols distract us
- Controversy – traditional and contemporary (worship and service forms)
- Change – is viewed differently
- Is past life (of our congregation) wasted?
- Schism – between 1st and 2nd service, but worshipping God in both!
- Hard to celebrate diversity!
- We can become judgmental
- We need to be better listeners! Communicate!
- We are doing many things – are we going in the same direction? Do we have a focus? (Like several pages in one book)
- Do we worship our building and people rather than God?
- Fields are ripe! People are searching....
- It is about a relationship to Christ

Taking a Look at Atonement Lutheran and Beyond

“A Look at Our Congregation...”

We are Proud of...

1. The Boutique
2. Our music
3. Diversity in worship opportunities
4. Awesome sermons
5. The message from the pulpit
6. “Support during change...”
7. Adult Baptisms
8. Our outreach, e.g. layettes, meals-on-wheels, etc.
9. Handicap Accessible
10. Retreats – especially for women
11. Friendships and relationships
12. Smallness
13. King’s Kids – as outreach
14. That we have survived surrounded by large churches
15. We do things well when we do them
16. Our remodeling of the facilities
17. The growing number of young families
18. Openness – even today – We can talk about it
19. Prayer Chair
 Lambs / Prayer Ministers
20. Visitor recognition
21. Small groups

Our Concerns or Fears...

1. Declining attendance
2. Declining income
3. Losing our Lutheran roots (Lutheran traditions)
4. Lack of accessibility in the Education wing
 Don’t have automatic door openers
5. “Feel personally and corporately ‘stuck’”
6. Need formalized way to check up on members not here
7. Need more direct communication rather than rumor
8. About being a maintenance church rather than a growing church
9. Need to trust the Lord for guidance
10. Smallness is a “concern” and a “proud”
11. Are the different groups talking as they do their planning?
12. We need to use our Mission and Vision Statements
13. Question on our attitudes toward growth (spiritually and in numbers)
14. Need to talk openly
15. Concern about our financial capability

16. Need to motivate all the members
17. Commitment and involvement to new programs
18. We can't afford our property
19. Difficult to fund our work

A Look at our Community and Beyond:

Our Statistics Tell Us:

1. We have had years of loss, but the income has grown.
What happened?
2. Diversity covers many things, e.g. race, age, etc.
3. We need to go outside New Brighton and Fridley areas – expand out.
4. But, 66% of the population in our zip code are not members of a church....this is a huge mission field.
5. Less new members every year (from our congregational statistics)

Looking at Atonement's Current Mission Statement and its Vision:

We are currently living out our Mission and Vision by:

1. We are living at the comma, - stuck there. Not too invested in either side.
(This was a comment re: the comma between Make Disciples, Grow Disciples).
2. Some of the groups are trying to carry this out – e.g. the education/youth group, and the hunger group.
3. We have a great responsibility to educate our children and youth in the faith.
4. We are good at giving. We are not strong at inviting.
5. We go to people in need – doing that. BUT some things we are doing are at the center of our mission and are not addressing the needs.
6. Some things we are doing are the “battery starters.” - Conversation starters.
7. We can go the next step! Take the risk!
8. Use our facility every day – open it up!

Our Vision Statement – Does it say what needs to be said?

1. How about leaving out “...in need,” and putting in “people.”
2. Growing ourselves (small groups)
3. It applies to people within as well as on the outside. If so, then add:
“nurturing and helping maintain others zest for God inside and outside our walls.” (How do we maintain and nurture that “zest”?)
4. Think the Vision Statement speaks to “making disciples” rather than “growing” disciples.

GROWING INTO THE FUTURE

Three to five years from now Atonement Lutheran has grown in many ways and is having a powerful impact I the local community. (Umbrella statement for all small group work)

Group I: Atonement Lutheran is “making disciples.” Three years from now, what will that look like? What will be happening? What will be in that picture?

Table 1:

- We will have a van for addressing special needs and for people without cars.
- We will be partnering with other area churches
- We will be a church of small groups.
- We will have additional services, e.g. Sunday night
- There will be ministry of and by the lay people
- We will consider selling the church and renting space – flexibility
 - Will set up an endowment

Table 2:

Note: If we are to grow, there needs to be something different with methods:

- Everyone is involved in a small group
- The facility is open to the community and is used every day
- Entire community knows this is a safe, nonjudgmental, welcoming place
- Someone available for prayer, e.g. 3-9 p.m.
- Membership is bigger than it is now
- Visitors would “know what we are about”
- Interdenominational events are occurring
- More emphasis on youth ministry (leader)
- Kitchen is in use regularly
- Have a policy to ensure borrowing equipment possible, and trust in the users.

Table 3:

- Weekly broadcasts (via simulcast) with renowned speakers
- Group/family Bible studies – continuous learning
- Current with technology, i.e. Electronic newsletters, web page, etc.
- Advertise within the community (newspaper)
- Expand the youth program
- Sponsor health/wellness community event i.e. Blood pressure checks, etc. – reaches out and brings people to the church
- Affordable day care (youth and adult?)
- Music concert series – partner with area churches? Fundraisers?
- Enable diverse populations to feel comfortable in a Scandinavian Lutheran church – through music? Learning about other cultures?
- Partner with area ELCA churches on various initiatives
- Satellite church affiliated with another church
- Consider a multi-use facility in place of the church (this was *)

What resources do we have to make this happen?

- Willingness to try new things
- Web site
- People with connections
- Simulcast: We have technological capability
- Music: we have talented members; survey other members or find out what their talents are
- Web master
- Many talents in our members
- Medical personnel
- Teachers
- Great kitchen facility – commercial kitchen

What else will we need?

- A van and van driver
- Confirmation faith mentors
- Mentoring leaders for committees and council
- Position to go out to people of color (diversity)
- People to help make connections
- Annual review of programs and how things are going
- Trained leadership
- Upgraded technological equipment
- Dollars!!!

Group 2: Atonement Lutheran is “growing disciples.”

Table 1:

- Be specific with our goals (in past have tried too many things)
- Set expectations for new members, rotate through committees or projects
- Discover people’s interest areas (skills, hobbies...)
- Tell people you need their skills, interests and passions
- Train people in the needs of the church
- Train people to tell their faith story
- Train people for leadership...leaders to lead
- Respect the amount of time people have to give
- *Need to train people how to care for those outside the congregation
- Sponsor outside youth groups like Navigators or others like Scout Troops
- Sponsor church without walls for youth (?)

Table 2:

- All people have access to a small group
- Young adult, newly married and young family groups
- Community uses building every night
- Everyone knows and can share their faith story

- Multi-generational Sunday School
- Accessibility
- On-going Gatherings to discern the congregation's call

Table 3:

- Discipling process – link mentors with people in specific age groups, e.g. 20-30 year olds, 30-40 year olds, etc.
- Educate on how to be a mentor
- Teach people how to tutor
- Develop members to support, teach, minister to single parents
- Get AA group in here (get in intergroup listing)
- Recovery/intervention support groups
- Teach our kids to serve by serving

What resources do we have to make this happen?

- The above ideas need people's time, but we also feel we need maintenance for the building and parking lot so they are inviting.
- The use of signs and the web site
- Training resources
- Pastor inspiration – people using time effectively
- Synod resources available (e.g. Inviting Team)
- Each other
- Pastor
- Council
- Call-tree to people you don't see (small groups help with this)
- People here who are in recovery
- 120 active members
- Knowledgeable people
- Space
- Legal kitchen

What else will we need?

- More volunteers
- 50% of baptized members attending worship regularly
- Pew sitters becoming active and in one group
- People willing to share their needs
- People willing to be nonjudgmental
- People with open arms – not condemning
- Food
- Programs to take us out of church to serve others (not just serve a meal and be gone, but to sit down and talk/listen to those who want help)

Group 3: Atonement Lutheran will be living out its Vision of “We will GO to people in needs...etc.” (Complete Vision Statement)

Table 1:

- We will be delivering bread, quilts, etc.
- We will be delivering compassion and concern for one another (actually showing it)
- There will be small groups (no limit)
- We will be a larger congregation
- The Education Committee has everything they need to train up our children in the faith
- We are taking worship to Meadowbrook (or ? Wood) and Brightondale
- We would be exploring programming with other churches
- We would have strong leadership
- We would be having such things as a Lutefisk dinner

Table 2:

- People of all genders, backgrounds, ages are enthusiastically sharing their gifts and their faith
- People would see God in others
- Every person would know their gifts and would be using them in service
- People would be asking about each other, hearing needs and responding
- People are living their faith in everything they do everyday, and its obvious
- There would be no question about available resources
- People would be eager to be at church and doing service
- We would see joy
- We would be having more Bible Study – all ages, offered different times
- The parking lot is fixed
- We would be having some recreational activities – social times

What resources do we have to make these things happen?

- Money
- People
- Commitment
- Growth in Discipleship
- Following the Great Commission
- Joy!
- Eager to serve and be at church
- Many loving people
- Committed staff
- Commercial kitchen
- Prayer – established

What else will we need?

- Monthly communication from Council
- Unity in moving forward
- Need to discover people's gifts and passions
- Regular opportunity for transforming events
- Education and Youth Ministry
- Accessibility
- Van
- Non-judgmental attitude

What are our Observations about the Vision Reported?

- It is hopeful!
- We are getting along (in today's work)

What are the Implications for Me as a Member?

- Leadership is needed
- We are looking for training
- "I need to get active again"
- "I am so excited to stay here!"
- Energized today!
- Our gifts will be used!

What Will Happen to the Work Done Today?

- The newsprint will be recorded by the Facilitator
- The Newsprint and the Facilitator's Observations will be compiled into a document which will be available to all who wish to receive it (Congregation determines the best way to make this report available)
- The Growth Gathering Report (referred to above) will be a key document for the work of the Growth Task Team
- The work of the Growth Task Team is regularly reported to the Council, and when completed in a strategic plan, and will be reported to the congregation

Quick Evaluation of the Afternoon's Event: (words or phrases shared)

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------|
| • Uplifting | Healing |
| • Inspiring | Leery |
| • Encouraging | Informative |
| • Energizing | Joyful |
| • Community building | Refreshing |

Recorded by Shirley Teig, Consultant and Event Facilitator