

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight...”

Congregational Plan for Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church

Draft Copy December 2018

*“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight.
In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths.
Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil.
It will be a healing for your flesh and a refreshment for your body.” (Proverbs 3:5-8)*

These words from Proverbs are a good starting point for our congregational plan. These words from Proverbs remind us that God is in charge. They remind us that no matter what is going on in our lives (good or bad), whether that is on a personal level, on a congregational level, on a community level, on a national level, and/or on an international level, *we are called to trust in the Lord with all of our heart.*

To take risks in trusting God is not easy (recall Abraham, for example), even if that means we need to leave our “comfort zones.” When we face the challenges before us, we need to ask ourselves: *What is God calling me to do today as His disciple? Where is God leading us as a church?* These are the questions that this congregational plan hopes to address.

The root of these words (with all your heart) remind us of what is in the Torah. Jesus was asked, what is the greatest commandment? Jesus responded by saying, “‘You shall love the Lord your God *with all your heart*, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’ (Matthew 22:37-40).” These words also remind us of who we are called to be as church, to love God and to love our neighbor.

As we trust in God with all our heart, we provide a means to make an impact toward our future with God. We recognize that we cannot do this plan on our own. We need God, not only today, but in the future. There is an old saying, but still true: “I may not know what tomorrow holds, but I do know who holds tomorrow.” This plan, as we embrace God’s tomorrow, is intended to accomplish various goals:

- Provide a means for the church council to evaluate the church on a periodic basis
- Provide a positive impact to our current budget
- Provide a better identity and purpose for Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church
- Provide a means to strengthen current blessings and to open up growth areas
- Provide a multi-year plan with goals, objectives, and schedules
- Provide a clear identification of roles and responsibilities within Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church and all its people.

1.0 The Strategic Planning Process

Strategic Planning is a dynamic, comprehensive, integrated process used as a tool to reach our agreed upon goals and to be able to allocate the resources needed to achieve them. Therefore, planning is an aid to identify what will happen in terms of time, effort, and resources to achieve a desired end result. Hopefully, a strategic plan will provide a sense of vision and mission as well as a means of greater communication, cooperation, and coordination.

In describing this process, certain terms should be noted. For example, a goal is something that is desired in the long term (at least five years) in advance. Essentially, goals are

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the strategic (long term) end result. From the goals, objectives (or short term milestones to accomplish the strategic goals) are established. Ideally, objectives describe in the short term what will happen, when, and by whom.

The Strategic Planning Process consists of seven basic steps:

- (1) Address the current status – what are the blessings (or strengths) and growing areas?
- (2) Assess the future – where would we like to be? What are our goals?
- (3) Begin to develop a strategy – How do we get from (1) to (2)?
- (4) Implementation – Who are the people responsible for what needs to be done?
- (5) Budget Assessment – How do we plan to fund what needs to be done?
- (6) Schedule Assessment – What is a reasonable timeline to do (4) and (5)?
- (7) Evaluation – At a predetermined time, how are we doing? What changes have occurred that influences our current plan?

2.0 Address the current status of Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church

At a church council retreat held in October 2018, we identified many blessings here at Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church. Several strengths of Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church were identified as follows:

- This is a friendly and welcoming congregation
- We have creative volunteers
- We have strong knowledge of our needs in the community
- We have strong family ties
- We have up to date technology for a small church
- We have a great choir and music ministry
- There is a strong community outreach – even though we had adversity, outreach remained strong:
 - o Shepherds’ Kitchen
 - o Support of Helping Hands
 - o Support of Refuge of Hope
 - o Barney Bear Ministry
 - o Backpack Ministry
 - o Quilt Ministry
 - o Support of schools with supplies
 - o Prayer Shawl Ministry
 - o Greeting Card Ministry
 - o Use of Thrivent Action Grants
- We have a single floor, newer building (which is handicap accessible) in a good location which is well maintained.
- We have a good volunteer base
- We have excellent spiritual leadership.
- We have a brunch fellowship every Sunday after church at Crossroads Restaurant.

We also recognized that we are human, that we all fall short of the glory of God, not only as individuals, but also as a church. Here are some of the growing areas that have been identified:

- We don’t directly address stewardship

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- We need to experience growth in membership
- We need increased attendance of those who are members
- We need to attendance of youth at services, catechism, and youth group
- We need more Bible Study
- We need to work towards a balanced budget
- We need to have adequate savings
- Increase support to the Northeastern Ohio Synod and Lutheran ministries world wide
- Learn how to be an invitational church
- We need to share the reasons “why I attend Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church”
- We lack nursery staff
- Those in the nursery need audio and perhaps video connections to the worship
- Shut-ins may benefit from recorded sermons
- We need to communicate information at our church better to the local community
- We could make better use of the signage – display our webpage and facebook page on the sign
- We could benefit from the Synod Resource Team’s advice and training
- We need to be aware of opportunities to reach out
 - Letter to new Eagle Scout
 - Congratulations to students who have excelled
 - Graduation gift to high school and college seniors
 - Participate in local parades and festivals
 - More promotion of Shepherd’s Kitchen
 - More promotion of our Christmas Cantata
- We could add more fun family activities, such as a “Dinner for 8” ministry (or a concept like it) and a Family Game Night
- Revive a men’s group (Men in Mission) including mentoring teens and young men
- Committees to meet at least once a year or even have more regular meetings
- We need a contingency plan for when key staff are unable to be active

3.0 Assess the Future of Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church

The next step in our strategic planning process was to envision how we would like to see Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran grow in the next few years. In the future, we hope to see where God is leading us as a church. *Essentially, how do we trust God for the future of His church at Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church?* Here are some possibilities that the church council came up with:

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4.0 Developing a Strategy and Implementation

These two functions seem to go hand in hand. As we looked at our current status and our envisioned future, the best way to develop a strategy and to implement it was involvement with our current ministry teams. Here is a draft for how each of our ministry teams will be involved with this process.

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4.1 Outreach Ministry

We are blessed to be a giving church. Thank you to all who love their neighbor in so many ways, especially our outreach team ministry.

Blessings

- We have a strong community outreach
- Even though we have had adversity, our outreach has remained strong
 - o Shepherds' Kitchen
 - o Support of Helping Hands
 - o Support of Refuge of Hope
 - o Barney Bear Ministry
 - o Backpack Ministry
 - o Quilt Ministry
 - o Support of schools with supplies
 - o Prayer Shawl Ministry
 - o Greeting Card Ministry
 - o Use of Thrivent Action Grants
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Objectives

- Team / coordinators
- Evaluate current outreach services
 - o Keep and promote our strong outreach services (i.e. Shepherd's Kitchen, etc.)
 - o Identify new/refresh outreach opportunities
 - For our church
 - For our community
 - For the world
- Church/congregation information – is it updated? Church business cards?
- “Hand up” – have a list of services provided within the community to help those in need (i.e. Helping Hands, etc.)
- Community Opportunities
 - Welcome Wagon
 - Local Parades, festivals, etc.
 - Outdoor concerts or art fest
 - Consider holding “off site” events
 - Refreshments for adjoining softball field

Goals

- Spreading/sharing the Gospel by showing God's love through service
- Strengthen our relationships with other congregations through outreach joint projects
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4.2 Worship and Music Ministry

We are blessed that Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church is a worshipping church who gives their love, praise and thanksgiving to God. Thank you to everyone who share their talents in our worship. Thank you to lectors, ushers, greeters, and acolytes. Thank you to our talented musicians in our choir, with a special thanks to Susan Kaschak who leads our music ministry.

Blessings

- We have a great choir and music ministry
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Objectives / Growing Areas

- More people on Altar Care
- New Praise and Worship Team
- New Praise and Worship songbooks
- Tune piano
- Outreach to shut-ins

Implementation

- Train more people for Altar Care
- Have Choir or Praise Team help teach new songs to congregation
- Outreach is being implemented by caroling and podcast (which Jacob has taken the lead on)

Goals

- Children's Choir
- Newer baby grand piano
- New carpet in sanctuary
 - Remove choir pews (but do not get rid of); this makes room for organ, piano, Christmas tree
 - Maybe keep 1 pew in choir area for Susan to sit on (possibly implement right away)
- Where Christmas Tree is usually put, it blocks overhead use. Moving two pews in choir area could solve this problem. One pew could maybe go in foyer under Mary's window. Move table in front of stain glass window. (Possibly implement right away)

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4.3 Christian Education Ministry

Blessings

- Pastor Scott has been teaching confirmation here since September 2018. This will be a two year ministry; the first year will focus on Luther’s Small Catechism while the second will focus on the Holy Bible.
- We have been blessed with 5 confirmands who attend and participate regularly. Their parents are strongly committed to and supportive of their children.
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Growing Areas

- We need to address offering more adult Bible Studies. A time to offer these studies will need to be examined.
- In the near future (5-10 years from now), we hope that we would be in a position to offer some form of Vacation Bible School.
- We need to offer a Men’s Bible Study or a Men in Mission Ministry
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4.4 Property Ministry

Blessings

- We have a single floor, newer building (which is handicap accessible) in a good location
- We have property that is lovingly and well maintained.
- We have a dedicated team of people who work on various property needs whenever problems crop up.

Growing Areas

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4.5 Stewardship Ministry

Blessings

- We have dedicated people who count money every Sunday.
- We have a dedicated Treasurer and Financial Secretary who keep our church running smoothly
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Growing Areas

- We need work toward a more balanced budget
- We need to have adequate savings.
- We need to increase our support to the Northeastern Ohio Synod and Lutheran ministries world wide
- We need to offer a noisy offering to help Lutheran World Relief
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4.6 Youth Ministry

Blessing:

- We have at least five dedicated youth who come to worship (including coming up for the message for Young adults), acolyte, and attend and participate in confirmation.

Growing Areas

- We have needs regarding ministry to younger children
- We lack a nursery staff
- We need more youth ministry, activities and leader(s)

4.7 Evangelism Ministry

In September 2017, Pastor Scott attended an evangelism workshop while he was in the Southern Ohio Synod. Here are some observations from that workshop with respect to our church:

We will no longer be a welcoming church. ... Think about that statement. How do you react to that statement? This statement was discussed at the “Fishing for People – Evangelism for All the Baptized Workshop” led by Pastor Katie Kerrigan (from the Southern Ohio Synod Office).

We here at Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church certainly strive for being welcoming and we are a wonderful, welcoming church. We show hospitality to visitors and even try to accommodate them. We keep our building clean. We have our message for young adults during our worship to help them feel welcome in worship. We have screens and visual aids to help someone new with our worship. Pastor Scott tries to remember to announce page and hymn numbers to help visitors with the flow of the liturgy.

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Yet, the statement comes back to us – We will no longer be a welcoming church.

Those churches, who choose not to be a welcoming church, recognize an inherent flaw in limiting ourselves in being welcoming. It is a passive activity. Being a welcoming church is not an evangelism strategy. It is like having a party, getting ready for it, but forgetting to send out the invitations.

We need to build upon our welcoming nature. We need to grow as a people of God to be an *inviting* church, and eventually, to be a *missional* church. Consider the passage from Mark 1:14-18. The events take place after John was arrested. Certainly, not a safe time and place to follow Jesus. Evangelism means taking risks. Consider the people Jesus called. They were not the clergy of the time, but fishermen. Also note, as the apostles did in the passage from Mark, we are called to follow Jesus to fish for all people, and to do so immediately (dropping everything we are doing to follow Jesus). For this to happen, we need to embrace the title of that workshop, “Fishing for People – Evangelism for *All* the Baptized.”

For us to move out of our comfort zone of welcoming, we need to recognize the sense of *All*. Evangelism is not just a job only for the pastor. Evangelism is not something that only a specialized team at church should do. Evangelism is not about focusing on more “Butts and Bucks.” Evangelism is something that I won’t do because this is not my “thing” or that I am not gifted in evangelism.

Evangelism is taking seriously the call for *all* of us to be Jesus’ disciples (remember our Living Faith Group Bible Study this year?) and to follow Jesus by denying ourselves and taking up the cross. This means to be willing to take a risk. Evangelism is living the gospel of Jesus Christ every day with everyone we meet. In the immortal words of Red Green (a fictional character on a PBS Canadian television program who was the possum lodge chair), “Remember, I’m pulling for you, we’re all in this together.” And that is the attitude that we all should have: Pulling together; Recognizing that each and every one of us has a stake here (and each and everyone one of us is important here, an integral part of our church); Remembering to pull for or to help one another.

So, how can we become an inviting and then a missional church? An inviting church first needs a team that can guide the congregation to be inviting. This begins with each of us learning to share our story and learning to talk to someone else about “my church.” At the heart of this sharing our story, we should be able to answer questions like: What good things can you say about our church? What does our church do well? What is currently going on at our church? What does it mean for me to be a Lutheran Christian?

Once we get the hang of being an invitational church (and that will take time), we need to expand our horizons even more to be a missional church. Michael Frost described the “Five Habits of Highly Missional People” by using the acronym BELLS. **Bless** – We are intentionally to bless people through words, deeds, and gifts. **Eat** – We are intentionally to eat with people, particularly with at least one person a week who is not part of our family, friendship circle, or faith community. **Listen** – We practice the art of listening to others, and also listening to God. **Learn** – We are continually learning and relearning to reflect more fully the image of Christ for the world. **Sent** – We are God’s ambassadors in the world. We must never forget that we are sent to participate in God’s mission to redeem and reconcile the world.

Blessings

- Updates the outdoor sign with current invitations and inspirational slogans.
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Growing Areas

- Invite Assistants to the Bishop to Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church for information and training regarding evangelism
- Form an invitational evangelism team to teach the congregation about being invitational and to grow in our evangelism.
- Coordinate with Christian Education about teaching evangelism
- How can we all be missionaries to Northeastern Ohio?
- How can we become more comfortable with our identity as Lutheran Christians?
- How can we expand our networks and opportunities to evangelize?
- Devise a program for visitation (in person or through media) to all members of the congregation.

Objectives

- Evangelism team/coordinators
- Update church information in publications
- Building a “welcoming church” to become an invitational church and missional church
- Simple acts of “kindness” service project(s)
 - Coffee, water give aways (when ball field is in use)
 - Around town – trash, leaf pick up, etc. (adopt a highway?)
 - Business blasts – employee goods thanks for serving community
- T-shirts for teams and/or outreach service activities
- E-scrip worship
- Evangelism tools – tell “your” story

Goals

- Spreading / Sharing the Gospel by showing God’s love through service
- Grow our congregation family
- Find ways to build the connectiveness
- Strengthen our relationships with other congregations

4.8 Technology Ministry

Blessings

- We have up to date technology for a small church.
- We are blessed to have Jacob Schandel who oversees our technology.

4.9 Administration

Administratively, we have been blessed. Thank you to Mary Drotleff who has been outstanding in her duties throughout the year. Additionally, she always greets people who drop-in or who call on the phone with a wonderful and friendly presence.

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4.10 Pastoral Ministry

Regarding Pastoral Ministry, the pastor will be foremost involved with the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the Holy Sacraments (Holy Baptism and Holy Communion) so that the church may be gathered in worship to show their love, praise, and thanks to God. The pastor will be involved with teaching ministries, such as confirmation. The pastor will also be available for visitations in the hospital, to shut-ins (both at their homes and nursing homes), and in grief situations. The pastor makes himself available for funerals or memorial services. The pastor will be involved with the multiple ministries of Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church to his or her abilities (see sections 4.1 through 4.9). The pastor asks for the prayers from the church to serve without reproach so that the people may be renewed and God’s name is glorified in the church.

The pastor also meets with fellow Lutheran clergy in the Southern cluster of the Northeastern Ohio Synod. Additionally, the pastor supports synod-wide functions, such as the Synod Assembly and other events. The pastor also takes continuing education to keep current in his ministry.

Pastor Scott often includes in his prayers, “Gracious God, help me to be the pastor that you called me to be here, that I need to be here.” Pastor asks for your prayers and support to help him in his ministry at Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church.

5.0 Budget Assessment

The budget shall be assessed annually by audit. Here is a summary of our recent past actual incomes and actual expenses.

Year	Total Giving Income	Total Income	Total Expenses	Difference
2013				
2014				
2015				
2016				
2017				

As we plan for the future, we will need to keep in mind certain property concerns, such as furnace repairs, air conditioner repairs, roof repair, future parking lot repair, etc.

6.0 Schedule Assessment

We will need to have a more complete schedule as we continue to identify our blessings and growth areas (goals and objectives). Here is a sample schedule for some identified Growth Areas in this congregational plan that should be considered for the given timeframes:

Ministry	Task	Start	Finish
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7.0 Evaluation Recommendations

It is the recommendation, that this strategic plan be evaluated by the congregation at our annual meetings. This will give the congregation the opportunity to have their voice in this plan on an intentional basis. With these inputs from the congregation, at the church council meeting in that following January, church council will include those inputs, make changes to the plan, and follow through on those changes in that coming calendar year.