

transitions

Letter to the Congregation,

Councils and Staff of

Bethany Lutheran Church

Presented by

The Transition Team

May 15, 2015

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Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.--Paul's Letter to the Philippians, 1:2-6 (New International Version).

A Message to Bethany About its History and a Promise for its Future

Bethany Lutheran Church has a strong and vibrant history that stretches back to 1876; the same year Colorado became a state. The Mission Board of the Augustana Lutheran Synod sent the Reverend F. Lagerman to Colorado in 1876 to investigate the prospects of organizing Swedish Lutheran Churches in Colorado. On September 20, 1878, six people met to organize the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church (now Augustana Lutheran Church). Dr. Johannes Tellen, was called by the Mission Board to take charge of this small congregation. He arrived on April 7, 1880 and stayed until 1884.

Dr. G. A. Brandelle was called to Denver as Augustana Church's second pastor. He delivered his first sermon on July 12, 1884. In 1886, lots for a mission were purchased at 38th and Franklin Streets for \$850.00. A chapel was built on these lots in 1887 to serve the Swedish people in the area. This building still stands. The Augustana pastors conducted weekly services there for many years.

In 1907 Dr. Robert P. Acsell was sent by the Augustana Mission Board to organize and become Bethany's first pastor. "The Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Bethany" Church was organized, January 29, 1908. He served as pastor until he retired in 1935.

A new church building and parsonage at 32nd and Gilpin Streets was started in September 1908. Four pastors faithfully served Bethany in this location. Many of these were hard years for the church. World War I brought hardships especially during the flu epidemic of 1918-1919, when fourteen of the members of this small church died.

The depression and drought of 1930 also caused much hardship as many of the church members were without work.

World War II again tested and brought much sorrow to the members of the church. Fifty-six members were on the service rolls, and one member paid the supreme sacrifice.

On March 13, 1955, the decision was made by the congregation to purchase lots on East Hampden. The first portion of the new church was completed June 8, 1958. Bethany's congregation grew and the building expanded during the years that followed and was completed in early 1972.

On the morning of November 15, 1984, at 2:50 a.m., a three-alarm fire engulfed and destroyed the entire Bethany church sanctuary. Fundraising began immediately, and on January 5, 1986, groundbreaking took place for our present church home. On June 28, 1987, the first service was held.

Bethany has had nine senior pastors, the most recent, Reverend Ron Glusenkamp, served from 2006-2014. BLC has been served by many associate pastors, including most recently, Reverend Ruth Ann Loughry, who served from 2007-2014. We have been blessed by many talented and generous interns, staff, lay leaders and congregants. We are grateful for Reverend Russ Britton and Pastoral Intern Stefanie Fauth-Lemke and our interim pastors, Reverend Dr. Paul Svingen and Reverend Debra Engquist.¹

As we review our long and powerful history, we are reminded that Bethany has survived many transitions, including war, disease, poverty, separation, fire and death. We believe, with God's help Bethany will continue to thrive. In fact we have been promised,

"And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." --

Matthew 16:18 King James Version.

¹ Hansen, Bethany Lutheran Church 1908-2008. The Publishing House: Westminster, CO. 2009.

As we consider our church during this time of transition, let us remember our history and God's promises to us and take heart. We work in the certain knowledge and joy, as expressed by Paul, that we continue the work of Christ on Earth, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. One day, we may say that we were a part of God's good work until the day of Christ Jesus.

The Transition Process

When a clergy member or in this instance members leave the church, the ELCA Synod Office governs the call process for the affected congregation. The Synod staff works closely with the leadership of the congregation to ensure adherence to its defined call process. The call process is designed to remind the congregation that it is more than the reflection of its leadership—it is body of Christ, God's Church. As such, it must persevere in its purpose even as leadership comes and goes. It must continue to lead even as it seeks its new leadership.

Accordingly, the call process is a two-step undertaking. First, the congregation must discern and determine a new and deepened sense of identity and purpose, which also helps it to identify the spiritual gifts and talents desired in a new Pastor. This part of the process is undertaken by a group of individuals appointed by the Congregation Council (CC) known as the Transition Team (TT).

Second, the congregation must conduct the call process culminating in extending a Letter of Call.

This Transition Period is intended to be lengthy, so as to allow the congregation sufficient time to grieve and accept the loss of its pastors, discern its needs and desires and pursue the new call.

The appointment of interim Pastors enables the congregation to move through the grief of the past while embracing its future. They also serve the practical purpose of aiding in the continuing function of the church.

The Transition Team's Role

With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Transition Team helps the congregation discern its purpose and direction going forward. It does this through a process resulting in this Transition Team Report, here in the form of a letter, and a Ministry Site Profile (MSP), which is used by the ELCA in the call process to connect congregations with pastors .

The Members of Bethany's Transition Team are:

Tom Brook, Facilitator	Bryan Fagerholt	Jack Lindsey
Don Abram	Nickie Fowler	Kevin McAuliffe
Angela Bergquist	Gretchen Hack	Leslie Stevenson
Suzanne Bryson	Susan Hinrichs	Mel Stolzenburg
Nina Engberg	Elaine Kaminen	

The Transition Team was commissioned by the congregation and held their first meeting in late November 2014. Once commissioned the members of the Transition Team divided into three focus groups, Mission Vision, Staffing Needs and Self-Study. The Transition Team and its focus groups examined the health of Bethany by gathering and reviewing data, conducting hundreds of interviews with members, lay leaders and staff and holding seven town hall meetings. In addition, the Transition Team structured, wrote and produced a comprehensive survey designed to encourage reflection on key elements of our values, mission and vision as a church and to ascertain how well Bethany is performing. At the close of a very successful survey submittal period, the TT reviewed and analyzed data from over 590 survey respondents. The Transition Team and certain of its members also met with Congregation Council and Ministry Council (MC). The Transition Team and its Focus groups met over 100 times since its commission in November 2014 through completion of this report in May 2015.

The Transition Team benefitted from the work of the Resource Alignment Study Group (February 2013, also known as RASG), for which it is very grateful. In doing its work, the Transition Team reviewed the recommendations provided by the RASG report (both

completed and incomplete). Where appropriate, the Transition Team affirmed RASG recommendations. The Transition Team did not attempt to duplicate the work of the RASG findings, but to build upon it going forward.

The Transition Team Report is composed of a series of observations and recommendations made to Congregation Council, which are set forth below. Upon their acceptance, it will operate as a guide and support to Bethany, its leadership and congregation.

Observations

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.--Paul's Letter to the Philippians, 4:8-9 (NIV).

BLC has a strong Lutheran tradition, as evidenced by its long and rich history, Bible-based preaching, meaningful worship and inspiring music. We are a community of believers in Jesus Christ, saved by Grace and led by the Holy Spirit. Bethany is a beautiful and diverse gathering place that provides both a sense of belonging and a respect for tradition.

Bethany is a congregation of disciples, longing to enrich their understanding of the Word and deepen their faith experience as they navigate this ever-changing world. Our parents want their children to grow up believers, strong in the Lutheran faith, independent and equipped to face life's challenges. Our youth want to better understand what it means to live in faith, so that they may become true and passionate servants of Christ. Our elderly want to retain a special place in the congregation, a source of love and support for the next generation, a voice of wisdom, guidance and tradition. In all of these things, Bethany congregants are thoughtful and compassionate. We

long to comfort, support and care for our community as each makes his/her way through the seasons of life and faith.

Our BLC staff who are frequently members themselves embrace their faith and put it to work for the benefit of all. Eager to serve, we see their presence in everything BLC does. They are the open door friend to your child, the friendly and knowledgeable face at the hospitality desk, and the guiding force behind our beautiful and inspirational music. From the practical to the divine, their can-do spirit lifts everyone around them.

Bethany Lutheran Church does not reserve its generosity for its members alone. BLC is a source of care, service, resources and food to organizations like Metro Caring where food is provided to the hungry and Operation One Nation, a Bethany-initiated outreach, where support is provided to returning military personnel and their families. In addition, every spring the BLC congregation gathers together to Be the Blessing and provide assistance to its neighbors and the larger community.

The Bethany congregant is independent minded and unafraid to take on a task that needs doing, whether it is singing in the choir, leading a Bible study class, or serving on a committee. Bethany has the spirit and community feeling of a small town church in a large church body. Much of the Transition Team Report will address ways to transition our processes, procedures and functions to better serve the large church community we have become.

We are grateful to all for your continuing patience and support during this transition. For those who prayed for the church and her leadership, thank you. For those who volunteered, thank you. For those who kept believing and working, thank you. For those who went the extra mile, thank you. For those who comforted the grieving, thank you. For those who listened to the concerned, thank you. For those who gave a pat on the back to the weary and a word of encouragement to the discouraged, thank you. For those who kept the doors open, the lights on and the phones answered, thank you. For those who kept the music flowing, thank you. For those who lifted the Word of God for us to hear, thank you. For those who kept giving financially, thank you. For those

who supported this process, thank you. On behalf of the Transition Team, we are grateful. You are the Church. You make being here in this special place called Bethany Lutheran Church a blessing for all of us.

Core Values, Mission and Vision

*For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.--
Romans 8:14 (NIV).*

Bethany's purpose (or Vision), as revealed by the Holy Spirit, comes from our commission from Christ (our Mission) and from our Core Values. The Core Values, Mission and Vision espoused by our congregation determine our identity, goals, activities, and purpose. They are the definitive statement of who we are, who guides us and what we are called to do. Therefore, Bethany's Core Values, Mission and Vision must be clear and strong statements of our true identity, understood easily by both the Bethany member and the community at large.

To this end, the Transition Team Mission and Vision Study Group: evaluated the currently articulated Core Values, Mission and Vision for BLC; performed extensive research on what other successful churches are doing; and conducted a congregational survey that produced 590 completed surveys.

Congregants from all age groups and levels of affiliation were asked to rate the importance of 41 statements that portrayed various aspects of church life (the quantitative analysis). Congregants also rated the degree to which they perceived each aspect of church life was being achieved in the period prior to our current interim. Finally, congregants answered open-ended questions dealing with their dream for Bethany's future and the qualities they are looking for in new pastoral staff (the qualitative analysis). See Appendix 1.

The Core Values conversation is largely a reflective one. The congregation is speaking to what it holds most dear. The TT Congregation Survey results confirm, in many respects, the findings

from the RASG study. The significant findings of the surveys, town hall meetings, research, and other conversations with the congregation are as follows:

- Christian education appears at the top of the lists for importance in both the quantitative and qualitative analyses.
- Worship experience, hospitality and fellowship (community), spiritual development opportunities and service/outreach to our communities remain vital to our congregation.
- The congregation sees the music component of our worship service as being important and successful, and as a body we are looking for a matching level of quality in the delivery of the Word in our worship experience.
- Desire for growth of Bethany's congregation is very much on the congregation's mind, although additional study is required with respect to discerning what exactly this means for the church.
- Hospitality and fellowship (community) hold a high priority for our congregation, which is consistent with current research which states people are primarily seeking a spiritual home in their church.

Bethany's Core Values include: (1) Deliberate Christian Education/Faith Formation, supported and sustained over a lifetime; (2) Community of Believers, welcomed in love, united in Christ, saved by Grace, connected through worship, fellowship and service; (3) Spiritual Home of inspired worship, uplifting music and powerful connection to the Word; (4) Hands of God, being of service and doing God's work in our community; and (5) Opportunity for Growth, in our faith, commitment, and outreach.

Bethany, a long-standing "community church," yearns to deepen her faith and extend her outreach as she shares Christ's

church with her community. These are modest values, deeply authentic and beautiful in their simplicity. The Bethany member does not want to limit his/her faith to Sunday morning service and the occasional community project. They want to deepen their faith, so that they may grow spiritually and live into their faith every day and in all that they do.

Accordingly, the Transition Team RECOMMENDS that we use our Core Values as the primary touchstone for the spiritual growth of the congregation and the work of the church by first presenting our Core Values, as well as our Mission and Vision, as our face to the world. These Core Values would be manifest to BLC's members, visitors and the community at large. See [Appendix 2](#) with excerpts from St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Davenport, Iowa, one of the top 10 churches in the ELCA, as an illustration of how one church is effectively articulating its Core Values.

With its Core Values clearly identified and articulated, the congregation next addresses its Mission. Taken from scripture, it is the mission for the Church as articulated by Christ. The current Bethany mission statement is "claimed, gathered, and sent."

Vision is how we fulfill the Mission, it is the work we are called to do as revealed by the Holy Spirit. Discerning Bethany's Vision is an aspirational conversation. It is by its very nature spirit-driven and action-oriented. As such it must be approached with gravity and care, as well as energy and enthusiasm. It is the proper subject of prayer, study and discernment among the congregation. It may be expressed quietly in a discreet project, or announced as a church-wide call, it is the Purpose of the Church, as revealed by the Holy Spirit. As such, it will certainly evolve over time. In turn, we must grow into and evolve with it.

The Congregation Council and Ministry Council should continue to actively work in cooperation with the congregation to discern where the spirit is leading Bethany in its Vision, in both its narrow projects and its broader scope, incorporating its Core Values and Mission in discerning and doing Christ's work on Earth, as it is made known by the Holy Spirit.

The Transition Team supports regular evaluation of our stated Vision as it relates to our Core Values, Mission and spirit-revealed purpose. The Transition Team received feedback on the current vision statement of “The Vision of Bethany Lutheran Church is to be a preeminent missional church of the ELCA, recognized for forming vibrant faith among its disciples in order that they may be claimed, gathered, and sent.” that noted the redundancy with the Mission Statement and general lack of integration with our identified Core Values.

The Transition Team RECOMMENDS that the Congregation Council considers revising this statement or removing it in favor of a Core Values-based statement consistent with those articulated in Appendix 2.

Define, Elevate, Populate and Empower the Ministry Council

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.--Acts 20:28 (NIV).

A year and a half ago, BLC shifted from the traditional church Council to a “new” bifurcated structure composed of the Congregation Council and Ministry Council. Since this shift, the Congregation Council and the Ministry Council have been slow to fully adopt this new structure with its associated responsibilities and authority, resulting in uncertainty, confusion and lost opportunities.

The departure of the Senior and Associate Pastor, as well as key members of the Faith Formation team during this period of transition to the two-Council format highlighted certain weaknesses in the leadership structure. In the absence of clearly articulated roles, responsibilities and authority, staff members, lay leadership and congregants stepped forward to address pressing issues facing the church, often on an individual or small group basis and outside of the normal church channels or roles designed to address these issues.

Work performed outside of proper church channels lacks open communication, collaboration, authority and accountability. It results in confusion, inefficiency and misunderstandings. If it were to become institutionalized, it could seriously damage the church, as we lose both our integrity and the voice of the congregation. Though it may promise short-term gains, ultimately the entire church suffers.

Clearly defined, roles, structures, processes and authority within the church assure that no single voice overwhelms and overpowers the voices of the many. It brings different gifts to the table when important decisions are being made. It reflects the church acting as the body of Christ, as mandated in the Bible and intended by the Holy Spirit. Conversely, the church suffers when we: (1) operate within discrete silos of power and purpose; (2) miss opportunities to cooperate with each other in fulfilling the priorities of the church; (3) struggle to communicate effectively what is being done and by whom; and (4) fail to provide adequate support for the success of the action sought. These

factors contribute to a lack of confidence in the church and its leadership.

A functioning and empowered church organization imposes a rigorous review process to ensure that proposed actions are consistent with the Core Values, Mission, Vision, priorities and resources of the church. In return for undergoing this process, the church bestows legitimacy, resources and support for the proposed actions. A functioning church organization has the power to elevate a good idea to a course of action imbued with all the resources required to see it to fruition. Church-sanctioned work provides energy and credibility to the workers and instills confidence in the congregation. It is imperative for the health of BLC that the Ministry Council assumes its proper role within the church leadership.

The BLC Constitution provides that the Ministry Council be responsible for the ministry life of the church and have authority over it. The Ministry Council authority is complete except for (1) final financial decisions; and (2) final personnel decisions. With respect to the foregoing, the Congregation Council and Ministry Council are to work together, with the Congregation Council retaining final authority.

The Transition Team RECOMMENDS that the Ministry Council expressly acknowledges and accepts the authority conveyed by the Constitution and the Congregation, and act in fulfillment of that authority and responsibility.

The Transition Team RECOMMENDS that the Congregation Council affirms the Ministry Council's responsibility, authority and accountability over all aspects of Ministry, except: (1) final hiring decisions; (2) final budget decisions; and (3) final retention and termination of personnel decisions, which decisions are retained by Congregation Council.

It is envisioned that the Ministry Council and Congregation Council will collaborate on all major decisions, as evidenced by the President Elect of the Congregation serving on both Councils. Regular communication between the two governing bodies will provide greater clarity, unity and support around actions taken. Furthermore, this spirit

of cooperation will in turn encourage a culture of collaboration, community and cohesion among the congregation, volunteers and staff, elevating the work performed as well as the worker. This structure reflects the Ministry and Congregation Councils as being equal in stature, each performing their duties and looking to and collaborating with the other, as reflected in the organization structure depicted in Appendix 3.

To better describe the functioning of these two councils as the collective congregational leadership, the Transition Team RECOMMENDS that the Congregation Council be renamed the “Executive Council” and that the newly-named Executive Council and Ministry Council together make up the “Congregation Council.”

The Ministry Council is the effective voice of the congregation. It is intended that the two members of each of the Ministry Council teams elected by the congregation be supplemented with other individuals to provide for larger-team function capabilities and greater congregational representation. It is critical that the Ministry Council Teams grow large enough to act effectively.

Therefore, the Transition Team AFFIRMS the Ministry Council’s current activities to expand the membership of their teams, suitable to be a strong and accurate voice of the congregation and a fully functioning body capable of addressing the needs and goals of the church.

The Transition Team RECOMMENDS that the Ministry Council plans for its own succession, by identifying and providing for the training of future leadership, and planning for its transition by working with the Nominating Committee to help identify and train candidates.

Consistent with the above recommendations, and as initial demonstrations of the power of an effective Ministry Council, the Transition Team encourages each of the four Ministry Teams of the Ministry Council to take the leadership role in actively addressing the following issues of immediate import and impact to BLC. These issues represent areas where BLC is either underperforming or the congregation has communicated a desire for change.

Worship and Celebration

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.--Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV).

The compressed timing of the Sunday morning worship experience while cherished by many has garnered much criticism. In addition to the obvious staffing and logistics issues, there is the impact on the worship experience itself. A stressful dash from a congested parking lot, through a crowded hallway to a pew seems more like a race than a prelude to reflective, thoughtful worship. Under these circumstances, are we fully open to greeting a visitor or hearing the Word? After worship, we dash to our cars to beat the rush while our pastor sprints to the next service. There really is no time reserved Sunday morning for fellowship and quiet conversation.

We are a community church, supported by a community of families of all ages and types. We must reconsider the Sunday morning worship experience within the context of faith formation, family worship, fellowship, and Sunday school. We must evaluate what type of services we offer and when, and in what venue. Not incidentally, we should also consider whether we are creating opportunity for new spiritual sub-communities to be formed within our church. These pockets of friendship turn a church into a family, an idea into a mission. We must reorganize to provide the space, time, support and opportunity for all of our members to grow and find their place within the BLC home.

The Transition Team RECOMMENDS that the Worship and Celebration Team of the Ministry Council in conjunction with input from the Teaching and Learning Team, the Community and Care Team and the Service and Witness team consider alternatives to the current Sunday morning worship service schedule and content.

Consideration should be given to these various factors, including:
(1) Worship Content; (2) Faith Formation Goals; (3) Various Worship

Styles; (4) Staffing Concerns; (5) Music; (6) Hospitality; (7) Opportunity for Fellowship; (8) Number of Services on Sunday; (9) Services during the Week; (10) Timing of Services; (11) Being a Commuter Church; (12) Young Families; (13) Busy Schedules; (14) Staff, Logistics and Burdens; and (15) Different Venue Opportunities Within the Church Building.

Experimentation with changes to the worship schedule and content prior to final implementation to gauge congregational response is encouraged. This would allow the Worship and Celebration Team to gather feedback from the congregation and evaluate the results before making their final decision.

The Worship and Celebration Team of the MC has made great progress in beginning its review of the Bethany Worship Experience. In addition to developing and initiating a Summer Worship Schedule, it is actively communicating with the Service and Welcome Team, Teaching and Learning Team, pastors, staff and volunteers as they evaluate the Bethany Worship Experience.

Teaching and Learning

Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.--Proverbs 22:6 (NIV).

Over the last two years, the Faith Formation Team has experienced significant turnover and has lost nearly all of its leadership from children's Sunday school through middle and high school. No meaningful transition plan was put into place prior to the departures, leaving the remaining team members without direction, guidance and support. Furthermore, in many instances there was a lack of clarity around staff and lay member roles, responsibilities, and authority resulting in even greater uncertainty and ineffectiveness. These missteps have resulted in a lack of confidence in the faith formation programs.

The current Faith Formation team of staff and lay leadership have worked very diligently and made important strides to address some of

these issues. These efforts seem to be making progress particularly as it relates to the high school and middle school segments of Faith Formation.

The elementary Sunday school portion of the program continues to struggle in spite of the hard work and efforts of its staff and volunteers. The adult Faith Formation piece also appears to be adrift at this juncture.

The Congregational TT Survey responses identified education and faith formation as having the greatest disparity between its importance to the congregation and its recent performance.

The Transition Team RECOMMENDS that the Teaching and Learning Team in conjunction with the Faith Formation staff and key volunteers, immediately create and implement a short-term action plan to address current issues in the Sunday school program for elementary school children.

The Transition Team RECOMMENDS that the Teaching and Learning Team reviews, authorizes and approves the Faith Formation Plans developed for the middle school and high school students.

The Transition Team RECOMMENDS that the Teaching and Learning Team cooperates and coordinates with the Worship and Celebration Team to elevate and improve Faith Formation efforts on Sunday morning, as discussed more fully in the previous section.

The Transition Team RECOMMENDS that BLC hire a full time Director of Faith Formation (DFF), consistent with the qualities set forth on Appendix 4. It is intended that the DFF oversee, coordinate, integrate and be accountable for all aspects of Faith Formation at Bethany in close communication with and coordination with the Teaching and Learning Team of the Ministry Council, with an initial emphasis on elementary Sunday school curriculum, Family Ministry and adult faith formation programs.

The TT RECOMMENDS that these efforts begin immediately with a goal of having the DFF in place by July 2015, so that the DFF may have

some familiarity with and input into the curriculum plan for the 2015-2016 school year.

The Transition Team RECOMMENDS that the recruiting and hiring process followed for the hiring of this position be used to develop and implement a new and functioning overall hiring process for BLC, where the hiring process is clearly identified in advance and followed. The Teaching and Learning Team of the Ministry Council is responsible for the hiring process of the DFF working with the Congregation Council which would retain authority to approve the final job description and skills/experience being sought in a candidate, the proposed compensation range and ultimately hiring of ***the final*** candidate recommended by the Ministry Council Teaching and Learning Team, as laid out in the Proposed Action Plan and Timeline for Hiring the Director of Faith Formation as set forth in Appendix 5.

Service and Welcome

Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,"--Matthew 25:34-35 (New International Version).

The TT Congregation Survey, the town hall meeting feedback and the TT discussions with the congregation all point to a desire on the part of the congregation to be more welcoming and hospitable to visitors and each other. There is a desire to formalize intentional efforts in this area to provide opportunities for fellowship on Sundays with each other and the pastors.

Evangelism is just another word for a conversation about Christ. Some of us quite frankly struggle with it. While we like to joke, this struggle is not a Lutheran thing, it is a human thing. One of BLC's values is to grow in faith. When we welcome a visitor to the church or greet a

member we don't know very well, we are growing in faith. We are "inviting Christ in", and that is the first step to having a conversation.

The Transition Team RECOMMENDS that the Service and Witness Team be renamed to the Service and Welcome Team.

The Transition Team RECOMMENDS that the Service and Welcome Team develops ways to improve its hospitality efforts. Outreach begins in the church; the team should consider effective ways of improving hospitality among visitors and members, including methods used by the church in the past. It should evaluate these plans based upon their sustainability over time, including budget, plan for succession, measurable positive outcomes, and gathering feedback.

A lack of connection and collaboration has been detected within various ministry groups at Bethany. While wonderful work has been accomplished, often work is performed by an individual or individuals without the benefit of the authority, support and cooperation of the church body. These groups struggle along outside of the congregation's knowledge, guidance and support. Their efforts largely go unrecognized and unsupported. There is no plan for continuity or succession. Fulfillment of the group mission is subject to the stamina of its members.

Some attrition with respect to these groups is natural and healthy. Nonetheless church leadership should manage the process. These ministries would be better-served by a heightened level of involvement on the part of the Ministry Council, including more communication, enhanced support, and alignment with church priorities.

The church would be better served by greater awareness of these programs and groups. The Ministry Council is currently developing an app for BLC that will provide members a means of identifying and connecting with various groups and programs within the church. The TT fully supports these efforts, so that Bethany members can better connect with each other and the work being done.

The Transition Team RECOMMENDS that BLC identify and put in place a full time Director of Welcoming and Service (DWS). It is

intended that the DWS oversee, coordinate, integrate and be accountable for the Welcoming and Service aspects of Bethany's Ministries and that they work closely with the Service and Welcome Team of the Ministry Council. By way of guidance, an example of a job description from another congregation for a similar position is included as Appendix 6.

The Transition Team RECOMMENDS that the Service and Welcome Team of the Ministry Council in conjunction with the Director of Welcoming and Service evaluate existing outreach and service organizations supported by BLC. Identify the connection between the organization and the BLC mission. Look for ways to support the shared mission. Create a community of collaboration and coordination among the Ministry Teams, the congregation and the organization so that the church is aware of the mission and enrolled in its success. Provide a plan for leadership, support and succession to bring awareness of these service opportunities fully within the church body.

Caring and Community

Of the Bethany members taking the TT Survey, approximately 23% were over 70 years old. This figure reminds us that we have a significant percentage of our Bethany population that is currently in or will be entering old age, and experiencing some of the physical challenges, losses and concerns that accompany this season of life. The TT Survey results noted that a significant percentage of the church population identified care of the elderly as a high priority yet noted that they felt that BLC was underperforming in this area.

The Transition Team RECOMMENDS that the Caring and Community Team evaluate, make and implement plans to better address the needs of the elderly within the life of the church. Within that context, this team should consider issues regarding transportation, worship services, opportunities for faith formation, hospitality, and service. Explore ways to stay connected with our elderly. Construct a plan for leadership, support and succession to more consistently

provide these opportunities, so that we may better include and support our elderly within the church body.

A young Bethany member and student at Colorado State, wrote to the Transition Team to discuss her hopes for Bethany. She remarked on the need to create opportunities for belonging within the church, a sentiment reflected in the TT Survey and research. She suggested that Bethany encourage the creation of small groups. These small groups could be organized around anything from age to interests. The point was to have a community of peers available to support you in your faith. It's when we start to know and care about each other, that we truly become a community.

The Transition Team RECOMMENDS that the Caring and Community Team work with other MC Teams, Staff and volunteers to evaluate ways to encourage the growth of supportive small groups within Bethany, including those that specifically support our young people in middle and high school as well as college students and young families within our larger community.

Create a Collaborative Team-Oriented Approach to Leadership

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.--Romans 12:1-8 (NIV).

The Transition Team has observed that the culture at BLC has become more centralized, as opposed to collaborative or team-oriented in nature. Leadership, ministry groups, programs and staff work in discrete operating silos without sufficient contact with other groups within the church.

Leadership, without the benefit of community, collaboration, and communication inevitably elevates a few voices to the detriment of the many. It runs counter to the spirit of the church and ultimately may result in abuses of power, trust, and integrity. Conversely, a collaborative decision-making process elevates the actions and decisions of church leadership—providing both accountability and authority. Transparent decision-making models with clear and articulated outcomes engage and enroll the congregation.

The process may take longer, but the outcomes are infinitely better for everyone involved. When the common refrain is “no one wants to help“, it is easy to lose patience and take matters into our own hands. It is tempting to say, “I’m too busy, I don’t have time to help.” Do not do it. Have faith and be faithful. When you get tired ask for help. When someone asks you for help, give it. Become the community you are called to be. We are the body of Christ and we must act like it.

The Transition Team RECOMMENDS that the church lay leadership and staff take the steps necessary to move towards a team-oriented approach to leadership as previously addressed with the Ministry Council and by the creation of functional teams at the staff level for coordination and communication of decisions and their implementation as depicted on the diagram attached as Appendix 7. These teams include the executive Leadership Team consisting of the Pastors and the Ministry Directors who would be responsible for the overall executive management of the church, on a day-to-day basis and four staff Ministry Teams, as described in Appendix 8 and four Resource Teams as described in Appendix 9.

In this environment, decisions would be made and work performed in teams in accordance with transparent, well-documented and understood processes. The teams would be encouraged to communicate, looking for opportunities to collaborate and elevate the church Mission and Vision.

The Transition Team RECOMMENDS that the pastor titles be changed from Senior and Associate Pastor to Lead Pastor and Pastor, this change is in keeping with the trend within the ELCA and is a tangible reminder of the shift away from hierarchy and towards team. The Transition Team RECOMMENDS that the BLC Bylaws be amended to denote this change.

Provide Scope, Authority, Responsibility, Accountability and Succession for Staff and Key Volunteer Positions.

The Transition Team's interviews with staff, volunteers and groups highlighted ambiguities around job description, scope, authority and accountability.

In light of this ambiguity the Transition Team finds it imperative that clear expectations and guidance be provided to all staff, Ministry Council Teams, ministry groups, program leaders, and key volunteers.

The Transition Team RECOMMENDS that the Personnel Committee of the Congregation Council standardizes and modifies the job descriptions for each staff and key volunteer position, such that they clearly identify the position's Purpose and Scope, Authority, Responsibility and Accountability (PSARA), an example is provided on Appendix 10. Additionally, the TT RECOMMENDS that the Ministry and Executive Councils provide similar descriptions for each group and ministry organization within the church.

Bethany's Ministry Council, with its four Ministry Teams provides clear delineation of the ministries of the church. As recommend above and depicted in Appendix 3, the Staff Ministry Teams have a natural connection and reporting mechanism to the four Ministry Council Ministry teams. Each individual/group that performs ministry at Bethany should be identified with one of these branches, This same approach would be followed for the Executive Council, the Resource Teams and the groups that work on behalf of the church on the operational side including the Stewardship Ministry Team and Facilities Team, etc.

The Transition Team RECOMMENDS that the Executive and Ministry Councils create a "home branch" that connects all of the Staff Ministry Teams, Resource Teams, Groups and Organizations to the Ministry and Executive Councils, please see the diagram attached as Appendix 3.

The Transition Team also noted in our interviews that the Staff and key volunteers of the various groups and ministries were at risk of

and in some cases had “burned out” due to too many demands, too little support and confusing structure. It is our intent that the structure and support issues are addressed above. However, succession planning and the identification of additional resources is key to the long-term health of the larger church as well as the health and sustainability of the ministry groups and the volunteers of Bethany.

The Transition Team RECOMMENDS that the Ministry Council, Congregation Council, program leaders and key volunteers provide for leadership training and a succession plan for their respective positions.

Congregation Membership Rolls

Bethany publishes its membership numbers as in excess of 4,000 souls. However, the Congregation Council has not updated the church rolls as required by the Constitution. In prior reviews, members have been moved from the active to inactive rolls, without further follow up, thereby skewing our actual membership. It is important that Bethany have a greater understanding of its membership numbers. The TT RECOMMENDS that the Congregation Council complete a review of the rolls, in order to obtain an accurate number of church members.

Decommissioning the Transition Team

Once the Transition Team work is complete and the team is decommissioned, it is intended that members of the Transition Team will seek volunteer positions within the MC Team Focus Groups to assist them in the transition work.

The Church

We wrote this letter with the purpose of evaluating the health of Bethany, the Church. But, we all know Bethany is just an empty building without the people who come to worship each week. If we have learned nothing else through this transition, we have learned that each of us is an integral part of this church that is the body of Christ. As you consider this letter, consider also your place in the church. Have you found it? There is a place for you here. Have you given your time, talent and treasure in service to Jesus Christ? Jesus commands that we do so. The Holy Spirit has planted the seeds. Let us join together as the body of Christ and see what grows. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all. Amen.

Final Thoughts

By Faith we began, by Hope we continue, and by Revelation we shall obtain the Whole.--Martin Luther, Commentary on Galatians.

Finally friends let us move forward in this next phase of transition with spirits renewed, intentions resolved, heads bowed in prayer and voices lifted in song.

"The Church's One Foundation"

The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ, her Lord;
She is His new creation
By water and the Word.
From heaven He came and sought her
To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her,
And for her life He died.

Elect from every nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation

One Lord, one faith, one birth.
One holy name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses,
With every grace endued.

The Church shall never perish!
Her dear Lord, to defend,
To guide, sustain, and cherish,
Is with her to the end.
Though there be those that hate her.
False sons within her pale,
Against both foe and traitor
She ever shall prevail.

Though with a scornful wonder
Men see her sore oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder,
By heresies distressed,
Yet saints their watch are keeping;
Their cry goes up, "How long?"
And soon the night of weeping
Shall be the morn of song.

Mid toil and tribulation
And tumult of her war
She waits the consummation
Of peace forevermore,
Til with the vision glorious
Her longing eyes are blest
And the great Church victorious
Shall be the Church at rest.

By, Samuel J. Stone, 1839-1900

Post Script (Other Items to Consider)

The Transition Team recognizes this letter is long and has many recommendations and that the Church has limits as to leadership time, staff time and budget. As such these items are not included in the main body of the letter but rather are included here for consideration by the Ministry and Congregation Council as time and budget permit.

Facility Scheduling:

The Transition Team recommends that the scheduling of church activities and the facility be better coordinated. Perhaps under a single individual/reporting role/responsibility and potentially using more capable software.

Currently Rhonda handles outside groups, Janice handles Bethany-inside-groups, and Gayle handles Scouts and MOPS using the EMS scheduling software program.

Facilities:

The Transition Team noted frustration with the custodial situation. This is not new; there was also frustration historically with a fully employed Bethany custodial staff. That said, this situation warrants continued monitoring. The Director of Finance and Administration has a very full plate and Joel has done a marvelous job in that role. However, as he has reduced his hours at Bethany, it may be prudent to evaluate bringing in a Facilities Manager and beginning to split the business and facilities aspects of the current role, or at least provide a more senior, more dedicated resource who would have more time to manage the custodial situation, the facility maintenance plan and work with the Facilities Committee to stay on top of this large facility and all of its complexities.

Appendices:

1	Congregation Survey Results
2	St Paul's Lutheran Church
3	Organic Organizational Structure
4	Director of Faith Formation Job Description
5	Hiring Timeline/Process Director of Faith Formation
6	Job Description Director of Welcoming
7	Circle Organizational Chart
8	Ministry Teams
9	Resource Teams
10	Sample Job Description