

Bethel Lutheran Church

Our Mission

*To prayerfully Invite & Welcome people into
a relationship with God • Grow & Equip one another as
devoted followers of Jesus Christ • Care for & Serve others
empowered by the Holy Spirit*

The Vision

*...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...
Ephesians 3:14-21*

Core Value Meeting Final Report

In August 2015, members, guests and friends of Bethel Lutheran Church were invited to gather at one of two gatherings to offer feedback regarding the Core Values and Personality Traits of the Bethel Lutheran Church body. Together with those gathered we engaged in a process of discerning the question, “Who are we, really?”

This brief report is intended to give you the highlights of those results.

As you open this report, it is important for you to keep in mind two key points:

1. Not every individual response given is reported here. The purpose of the exercises in these gatherings was to find areas of significant agreement. Although there were many answers to the questions posed, there were specific trends and overwhelming agreement regarding certain traits and core values of the congregation. This report reveals the areas of strong agreement across the congregation.
2. The lists that are in this report are the words used by those who attended these gatherings. These are the answers you provided.

Personality Traits of Bethel Lutheran Church

The first exercise completed at the gatherings explored the “**Personality**” of Bethel Lutheran Church as a whole.

Below are the top answers given by those who attended. As you will see, when the descriptive words were similar; they were grouped together.

If Bethel Lutheran Church were a person they would be described as:

1. Friendly
2. Caring
3. Helpful/Serving
4. Fun
5. Welcoming of All

Let us simplify the list to single word descriptions:

1. Friendly
2. Caring
3. Serving
4. Fun
5. Welcoming

Those who attended these meetings used these words most often in describing Bethel Lutheran Church’s collective personality.

Why are there only five traits listed? There are two reasons for this:

1. People wrote down these words more than any of the other responses. It would be easy to lose sight of the most important words that we wrote down by listing all of them.
2. These “most used words” need to be remembered! If we are to live by what is most important to us.

Most us have a hard time memorizing long lists! Memorable is important for ministry.

Core Values of Bethel Lutheran Church

The second exercise at our gatherings addressed our **core values**. Core values are the qualities and characteristics that we hold most dear and it would go against our nature to violate them or to do the opposite.

Below are the top answers given by those who attended. Again, when the descriptive words were similar; they were grouped together.

The Core Values that we identified as important are:

1. Christ-Centered Community/Faith Driven
2. Caring/Nurturing
3. Making a Difference/Responsive/Serving the Marginalized
4. Hospitality/Acceptance/Welcoming
5. Spiritual Growth/Learning/Education/Discipleship
6. Generosity/Stewardship

The same list simplified:

1. Christ-Centered Community
2. Caring
3. Responsive
4. Hospitality
5. Spiritual Growth
6. Generosity

Those who attended these meetings used these words most often in describing Bethel Lutheran Church's core values.

Why are there six traits listed on this page? There are three reasons for this but the third reason will be explained later in the report. People wrote down these words more than any of the other responses. Also, it would be easy to lose sight of the most important words that you wrote down by listing all of them. Moreover, these "most used word" need to be remembered! For ministry we should be succinct.

What Does this Mean?

Now we have two lists. One list describes our collective church personality and the other sheet explains what we stand for.

If you put these two lists side by side you will notice they are complimentary. That is good!

Instead of having two words listed twice, we will include the next agreed upon word in our list. Also, these two lists are too long to remember, so let us simplify once again.

We Are:

Friendly
Caring
Serving
Joyful*
Welcoming

We Value:

Christ Centered Community
Responding to Needs
Hospitality to All
Spiritual Growth**
Generosity

*People expressed that we are a “fun” congregation. That is a good word to describe us. However, the Biblical equivalent to fun is joy. We definitely are joyful in our interactions and our service.

**Caring appeared on both lists. Instead of having the word repeated we removed it from the Core Value list and added the next Core Value, which is “Spiritual Growth.”

Is there a Biblical basis for these words? Yes!

WE ARE:

1. **Friendly-** The word “friend” is used often in the Bible. In the New Testament it used by Jesus and the New Testament authors when referring to fellow Christians. The Biblical origin of this word refers “to treating somebody as one of their own people.” Being friendly is about treating people as if they are one of the family. It also comes from the Greek word “love”.

2. **Caring-** is an important concept in the Bible. Jesus constantly cared for the needs of others. The word “care” in the New Testament also means to minister or attend to anything that needs to be done. The word “deacon” comes from this New Testament word.

3. **Serving-** Jesus lived a life of service. Serving comes out of caring. More simply put: Caring + Action = Serving. In many ways, you cannot serve without caring and care without serving.

4. **Joyful-** The people of Bethel said that we are fun. While that is true, the Biblical equivalent of fun is joy. Joy is not dependent upon external circumstances. One can be joyful in any setting. Joy is state of mind and it is contagious.

5. **Welcoming-** Hospitality is important too! Welcoming others to the Bethel family goes hand in hand with being friendly, caring and joyful. Some churches claim they welcome everyone, but Bethel not only believes it, but we show it!

WE VALUE:

1. **Christ-Centered Community-** The Church is the community that Jesus Christ established. We are not a social club or a social service agency. We are the Church and we gather under the banner of Christ and God’s purposes. Worship is the primary gathering for any Christ-Centered Community. We are a people of faith who strive to trust God for all things.

2. **Responding to Needs-** When there is a perceived need, we address it. Whether it is quilts for Lutheran World Relief or hygiene bags for the homeless. Making a difference in the lives of others is important to us at Bethel.

3. **Hospitality to All-** We see the importance of being a safe place and welcoming the stranger. Although this can be uncomfortable; we follow Christ who welcomed all who came to Him.
4. **Spiritual Growth-** We value life-long experiences that can lead to a closeness with God. Life-change is a journey towards God. This is not one specific thing but several activities that not only strengthens our relationship with God but also transforms us as we pursue these activities.
5. **Generosity-** We value giving to further God's mission! Whether it is for our ministries at Bethel or to outside organizations that make the world a better place, we see the importance of sharing our abundant resources.

The Opposite is True Too!

We are not: aloof, apathetic, selfish, unpleasant or cold!

We strive not to: live a life without faith in Christ or His community, ignore the needs of others, be skeptical, be wary of strangers or be stingy.

Why is all of this important?

This tells us quite clearly who we are and what we value.

With our key traits and core values clearly articulated, we can more confidently plot a course forward for Bethel.

Moreover, every church is unique. We are not a franchise like McDonald's. For the most part you can walk into a McDonald's anywhere in the world and get the same thing. Not so with the Church. True, we engage in many of the same activities, but no two churches are alike, including worship! Yet traditional worship for one congregation could be completely different for another congregation.

Many churches do not take the time to discover who they are and what they value. Instead, they will copy what bigger

churches are doing and try to imitate them. That rarely works. Bethel is Bethel. We are not anyone else and we cannot be anyone else and do it well. We must be ourselves. We should worship God, serve others and grow ourselves in ways that reflect who we are and what we value.

On Saturday, December 6th 2014 many Bethel members met in Torvend Hall to meet Pastor Ben and to discern whether or not he should become the next Lead Pastor. Pastor Ben told those present that in order to change the downward trajectory of Sunday attendance there would need to be a change in how we do things. The common sense definition of futility is “doing the same things over and over and expecting different results.” Participation in these meetings, the results and this report are the first steps in doing things differently.

What are the possible next steps?

There are several possible next steps in this process. It may be more correct to say that there are some questions we need to ask ourselves. Using the information given to us by the people of Bethel to define “who we are” and “what we value” we should look at (evaluate) the way we do ministry and ask if it faithfully reflects our uniqueness. This time of introspection and assessment might look at the following things:

1. Our Mission and Vision Statement
2. Our Logo
3. Our Ministries
4. Our Process of Spiritual Growth and Transformation
5. Our Approach to Guests on Sunday Morning

One of the questions we should be able to answer at the end of this process is: What does an active member of Bethel look like and how do we help all people who come to Bethel achieve that? It is also important to ask: How should an active member of Bethel feel?

We could ask the same question differently: What is the process of leading people toward life-change/transformation at Bethel based on our personality and core values?

A follow-up question is equally important: How do our ministries uphold and champion our stated personality and core values?

In Summary...

This is just the beginning of this process, not the end! Jesus gave clear instructions to his students (disciples) before he ascended into heaven.

Jesus said, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and **make disciples** of all nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and **teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.**”*

The disciples then became the ones in charge of the Great Commission. They were no longer just Jesus’ disciples (pupils) they were now apostles (ones who bring good news). Jesus entrusts us (the Church) with that same commission.

With this report as our roadmap, how will WE make disciples, and help ourselves and others with spiritual growth and transformation? How will WE help people to know and follow Jesus our Lord? What will WE do to build and continue to strengthen the Kingdom of God? God has given us opportunity to accomplish even greater things in the years ahead. Let US take that opportunity to build up Bethel and our community!

